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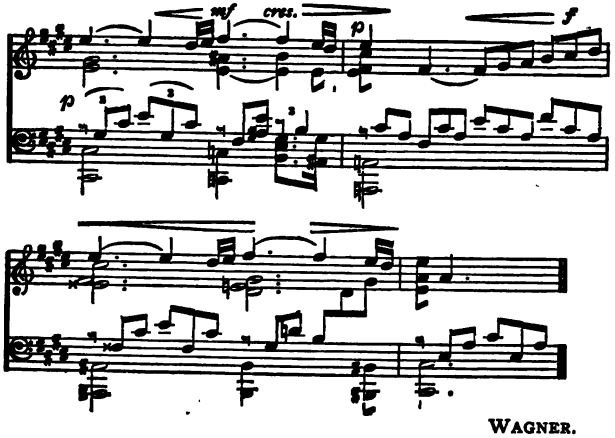
WAGNER'S

RING OF THE NIBELUNG.



WAGNER.

WAGNER'S
RING OF THE NIBELUNG,

AND THE CONDITIONS OF

IDEAL MANHOOD.

BY DAVID IRVINE.

"and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart."

SHELLEY, *Prometheus Unbound*,
Act II., Scene 4.

LONDON:
H. GREVEL AND CO.,
33, KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.
1897.

ML410
W15I72

Isab. But man, proud man!
Dressed in a little brief authority;
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence,—like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.

Aug. Why do you put these sayings upon me?

Isab. Because authority, though it err like others,
Hath yet a kind of medicine in itself
That skims the vice o' the top. Go to your bosom;
Knock there, and ask your heart, what it doth know
That's like my brother's fault; if it confess
A natural guiltiness such as is his,
Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
Against my brother's life.

Measure for Measure,
Act II., Scene 2.

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INTRODUCTION.

WAGNER'S *Ring of the Nibelung* has not yet got beyond the bounds of ignorant, irrelevant criticism. Even from some of the undoubted adherents to the Wagner cause, a sop is thrown to the watchdog of conventional morality when defending the *Ring* from critics with nothing to lose, no cause to uphold, no genius round whom to gather. It is useless to discuss seriously the import of Wagner's drama with these critics.

Anti-Wagnerism is not troubled with either coherency or consistency. It is like the perpetual tuning of an orchestra, which never begins to play a tune. It is one discordant din. Fortunately the dispensation of popularity lies elsewhere, and for those who run and read, much may be learnt if they take notice of the periodical dissipation of each successive attempt to do harm to Wagner. First, it is want of melody in the

early works; then, when this is found to be untrue by the discerning public, it is want of melody in the later works. This meets the same fate. Then it is dramatic poverty, immorality, vanity, abuse of other composers, and so on, till, with Wagner's ever-increasing success, we read of the bursting of the bubble of his popularity. The attacks become more bitter and personal, if fewer, and in the meantime the gradual march towards an unexampled popularity is taking place, in spite of which no critic is ashamed either of his ignorance or of his irrelevant mode of attack. These criticisms surpassing in sheer nonsense anything of their kind, are mostly buried in the mass of every-day journalism. No one—for the sake of ridiculing the poor literary hack at any rate—wishes to rake them out of the rubbish. They have served their purpose, and their authors are not so destitute of insight as to be unaware how easy it is to trade on cheap respectability without being called on to guarantee the genuineness of the article. Their sins are seldom visited on their heads.

The measure of the sincerity of Wagner's aims is best gauged by observing the unity of his

thought in the various departments where it found expression. These departments divide themselves into three: firstly, his outspoken views on public affairs; secondly, his theoretical and dramatic works; and, thirdly, his music. Penetrating all divisions, even when a complete change occurred in his view of the outcome of human activity, there is shed one bright, serene ray of light, making itself apparent in *Rienzi*, but first becoming irresistible in its intensity in *Tannhäuser*. This is the subordination of self-interest to the conviction of what one feels driven to do. Certainly some other factor is still needed to be convincing, for with all our intensity of purpose there is no guarantee that that purpose itself is not subject to error. The shallowness of our mode of thought allows a man to attach himself to some sect or body which is assumed to contain the truth, and permits the individual to fancy that, in devoting himself to the propagation of the articles of the sect, he is devoting himself to and advancing the cause of truth. Wagner never committed this initial blunder, which leads so many of our best men astray and perplexes us with the sight of

such devoted labour, regardless of tradition on one field and complete subserviency to tradition on another. Thus a man in the less worthy field of politics may spend his life in reducing the friction which arises from inequality and privilege; but such good as he has done is more than counterbalanced by a most curious slavery to privilege and inequality in another more important field. No one can conceive Wagner asking a Pope to recognise the validity of orders. He was not troubled with this obliqueness in his vision; and in this most complete freedom on all fields of thought from the incubus of historical tradition, there lies the secret of his great and growing popularity on the one hand, and the hatred he evoked on the other. People are fast becoming weary of the gilt-coated pills of ecclesiasticism, since for themselves they find that simplicity and unworldliness form the constituents of true religion.

In the social world, Wagner's quarrel was with the appropriation of nature's products to the pampering of individual selfishness. In official life, people were elected to offices for which they had no special equipment, overriding those who

had. In art, self-glory and personal enrichment were the objects of attainment, and not the pure interest of art itself. In religion, Wagner, in the work we are going to consider, held that man's salvation lay in recognising necessity in nature and in yielding to it instead of opposing it. This is the creed of latter-day altruistic optimism. Over all lay the darkening influence of the sordid desire to make money, destroying the pure love with which nature seemed imbued. Wagner was thus a thorough revolutionist. During the Dresden and early Zurich days he saw arise, in the overthrow of existing customs, the ideal individual of the future. Custom was conventionalism, and conventionalism was insincerity. This is the essence of Wagnerian opposition to authority as constituted.

If we wish to discover some means of understanding Wagner's instinctive distrust of constitutional authority, we must set ourselves the problem Laurence Oliphant set himself when in his novel *Piccadilly* he asked who is to act as missionary to the missionaries. There lies already a moral wrong in our mode of trying to make morality fit into our practice. So far we are contented to take our missionaries in all fields

as qualified to instruct us in morality. In what school they receive this important education is a mystery; and if they have it, what it is that prevents them from fulfilling the first duty of morality, namely, to trim their own light, is another. Freedom to act within the set limits of a sectarian creed is a travesty of freedom. It is slavery to a creed. Who is willing to free his creed so that he himself attains freedom? Some answer to this is provided in the *Ring of the Nibelung.*

Wagner, in a letter to Uhlig, said of the *Valkyrie*: "My whole manner of viewing the world in it has found its most artistic expression." * We must then search his life for other expressions of his manner of viewing the world, and once again his theory and drama and music. A chapter on the problem of authority and another on the individual characters of the drama precede the studies of Wagner's life, theory and drama and music.

* The quotations from Wagner's Prose Works are taken from the English translation by Mr. W. Ashton Ellis (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co); the poetical from Mr. Jameson's translation, published by Schott, with whose kind permission the musical examples are given.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROBLEM.

"*CROYEZ moi l'erreur aussi a son mérite.*"

The paradox contained in Voltaire's words finds its completest justification and its profoundest exemplification in Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung.* Wagner, his life throughout, felt himself in opposition to that code of inferred morality under which society counts itself respectable and religious. His position might be expressed in the words he puts into Siegmund's mouth in the *Valkyrie* :—

> "Whatever good I wrought,
> Others found it ill;
> Whatever seemed ill to me,
> Others counted it good."

When a writer * in perfect sincerity says that the *Ring* "is strangely confused and uninterest-

* *Chambers' Encycl.*, article "Wagner."

ing, and fails alike as a story and as a vehicle of theories, morals, or religion," it is certain that the attempt to understand the work has proceeded on lines of deeper and deeper research into the *mythos* in which the characters were enframed. But these characters sprang from the character of the age and life in which Wagner lived and was so profoundly interested, and not from the *mythos* at all. People have centred their attention on the wonderful frame, and forgotten the picture within. That picture, however, is ourselves, our wants, our hatreds, our affections. It illustrates the manly impulses of our nature and the self-inflicted bondage which keeps them in check, or the greed of egoism which deflects their course into channels running contrary to nature's goal. The attainment of that goal is the creed of optimism, the belief in the supreme attainment of happiness by developing and giving freedom to nature within us.

The *Ring*, however, at the same time contains a problem of renunciation, in the action of Wotan, on which is built the conscious tragic element underlying the work. This consciousness in renunciation and the unconscious instinct in

nature's demands, which we ought to follow or identify ourselves with, form two forces, from which the moral of the drama arises. This moral might be put in the form of the question, to what end should we put our consciousness? and the answer would be: to recognise what are the demands of our common nature, and yield to them. Again, we are forced to ask, how does this stand in relation to authority?

What has been quoted from Voltaire leads us at once into the difficulty of even stating the case lucidly. For it must not be supposed that wrong in itself can be proved right, and right in itself wrong. We have merely to consider the relative merits of what, with the so far evolved powers of abstract thinking at our disposal, is accounted right and is accounted wrong.

A further development of man's capacity to reason does by no means confirm the standard of morality accepted by the past age, and our geniuses and pioneers of thought are thus invariably tugging at the chains of their social prison. It is not as if they were confined inside the walls of a common prison-house, but as if outside, in full view of the beauties of nature,

they were chained to its walls, prisoners, yet outcasts, without the shelter, comfort, and society of those inside, but seeing a vision which fills them with aspirations and dreams unknown to those whose view is shut out by high walls. Still there are some within who have got a dim conception of what has met the genius' vision, by hearing what he utters; but apart from the repetition of these utterances there is no language to express the meaning except the common language used inside the prison-house, and that has long since been annexed by orthodox authority to assume as true what it is mankind's duty to regard as a problem remaining to be solved. The *petitio principii* fallacy lies at the root of all orthodoxy, and the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy is hurled at the objections raised by enlightened criticism.*

As an instance of the methods whereby orthodoxy uses to its advantage the terms which denote only in the abstract the question at issue,

* The system by which people are usually dumfoundered first claims a knowledge of how God created everything, and for what purpose; and when questions are asked, owing to the contradictions in which such assumptions land authority, the questioners are told that if it is not true they drive God from the government of the world.

let us take the employment of the words *religion* and *science*. When Draper, in 1873, called his otherwise effective book *The Conflict between Religion and Science*, it was not observed how he handicapped his cause by misstating his own case. Science was postulated as opposed to religion, and the self-appointed defenders of what a more ignorant age had allowed to pass for religion were not likely to spurn the terms when laid at their feet by their opponents. Even Schopenhauer, in his dialogue on religion between Demophiles and Philalithes, makes the argument of the latter lose most of its point by allowing Demophiles to monopolise the word religion; although it must be observed that in this particular case the dialogue is not carried on between a believer in orthodoxy and a sceptic, but between one who recognises the ingrained metaphysical bent in the human mind and another who sees this bent, when directed and controlled with the greatest assumption of authority, to be coincident with the deepest degradation and ignorance. In his *Fourfold Root*, Chap. V., § 34, Schopenhauer however says, "It is truly scandalous how even in our day in the writings of German savants

Religion and Theism are held as identical and synonymous." Herbert Spencer commits the same mistake as Draper, for in *First Principles*, p. 11, we read, "Of all the antagonisms of belief, the oldest, the widest, the most profound, and the most important, is that between religion and science." In his great and comprehensive summary of the dispute, entitled *Warfare of Science with Theology*, Andrew White does not allow himself to play the game for his opponents, but from first to last keeps in view the fact that religion can only be pieced together of its kind; while Huxley reduces the dispute to one between Agnosticism and Ecclesiasticism, for he says, "Theology the science is one thing; and Ecclesiasticism the championship of a foregone conclusion as to the truth of a particular form of Theology is another." *

Having thus shown the difficulty of classifying human actions under the abstract headings of right and wrong, owing to the appropriation by orthodox or conventional thought of the one for its own justification, and the infliction of the other on heterodoxy or freedom of thought for its condemnation, we must direct our attention to the

* *Controverted Questions*, p. 452.

problem with which the *Ring* alone concerns itself; and for this purpose it is necessary to make a sharp distinction between a universal sin, to which by the creed of Christianity the world stands committed, and that which forms the contentious matter of social discord. For Wotan's renunciation is often considered as if it possessed the elements of Christian renunciation or the philosophy of Schopenhauer; but whatever simmering the *Ring* may contain towards a profounder view of existence than ever optimism can possibly offer, there is nothing in Wotan's tragic resolution to detract from the original optimistic tendency of the whole work. In fact, the later, enormously developed and profoundly significant feature of renunciation—abdication would be a better word, but it fails to convey that immense conflict which the music reveals—is nothing more than the necessary depression of the one scale as the other is elevated. It is an obligation imposed by the exigences of the drama,* and impresses us more than the optimism, because

* See *Opera and Drama*, Eng. trans., vol. ii. of Wagner's Prose Works, p. 197: "The poet, then, who had to portray the battle of the Individuality against the State," etc.

the reality of the tragic nature of life as a whole is more closely bound up with Wotan than with Siegfried. From our standpoint, in spite of its obliteration by clericalism, Christianity has taken too deep a root to fail to make the profounder impression on us when fairly contrasted with optimism. Truly, to Wotan the Christian doctrine of renunciation cannot be applied, but if once the conscious element so profoundly at the root of Wotan's action is contrasted with the undeliberate, spontaneous action of Siegfried, then a deeper chord is struck. The optimistic moral of the whole work, although never abandoned,—in fact, Wotan's action should serve to light it up,—is fairly weighed down, to us of the dawning twentieth century, by the renunciation of Wotan. The mere carrying out of a dramatic exigency led Wagner to the verge of that world of thought into which a knowledge of Schopenhauer drew him. It was but a step that was needed, but therewith the Rubicon was first crossed. Before this step was taken, to attribute to Wagner pessimism in the meaning inculcated by Schopenhauer is not to understand that acute mind nor Wagner's own *Parsifal.* Merely to define the dis-

tinction in the broadest sense, it may be said that *Parsifal*, Schopenhauerian philosophy, the Christian religion, and pessimism in its philosophical meaning, are concerned with sin inherent in our nature. The *Ring of the Nibelung* never in any sense treats of this. It and all * Wagner's sayings and writings of this period maintain enthusiastically the inherent goodness of nature and man, and the glory of physical vitality. Law, imposed by the few on the many, first made sin possible. Man, to work his way out of the possibility of sinning, had to cast off the restraints of the law.

The *Ring* is thus solely occupied with a conflict between the assumed right of traditional authority and the natural instinct in man to satisfy his desires; but this conflict is not consciously carried on between opponents, as battles are carried on between armies each fatuously conscious that moral right is on its side and possessed of sublimely ridiculous faith that the one deity they both invoke aids one to the exclusion of the other, but alone in the person of Wotan the representative of traditional authority.

The view taken by Wagner is that, other laws

* Exceptions to this are pointed out on pp. 20 and 150.

being abrogated, all human desires, no matter what they are, become subject to one law, what is found in nature itself or is nature itself. This law needs no imposition. The conditions of imposition are in fact contrary to the law itself, and therewith cannot be conjoined. This one condition which gives validity to every human action is, of course, the familiar abstraction Love, which seems to be the property of every one to plant at the head of everything; this done, everything may be left in the old rut of egoism. God being Love, we have merely to drop the Love which does suggest something, and juggle with "God," which suggests whatever our egoism breeds. Authority, masquerading as an emperor, can tell its soldiers that at its bare command they must shoot down fathers and brothers. "God" is quite an appropriate mouthful for such purposes. Or Love masquerading in sexual desire for a woman, or longing for her wealth, or foresight in breeding contingencies, is never at a loss for authority in the person of a bishop to bless it under God. Love, however, as the feeling of compassion for every suffering thing, a derived knowledge that in sensuality lies suffering, and that compassion is suffering at the sight of

others suffering, had not dawned on Wagner so far. Thus, till Wagner was better able to define what love is, as Schopenhauer's philosophy taught him, the love postulated in the *Ring* cannot be defined satisfactorily in language. When, at the close of the *Ring*, Brünnhilde turns to the bystanders, and, in lines now excluded from performance, delivers them a homily, only telling them what love is not,—

> "Not goods nor gold
> Nor glory of gods,
> Not house nor hall,
> Nor lordly pomp;
> Not guileful bargains,
> Treacherous bonds,
> Nor feigning custom's
> Hard decrees,—

we find nothing positive, as the whole course of the drama teaches us. Wagner describes the difficulty in a letter to Roeckel written in 1856, two years after he had read Schopenhauer.

Pointing out how his artistic instinct led him towards a different solution of the problem of existence than that which his optimistic bent of mind sought, he continues :—

"In this respect I finally experienced the most striking illustration in the poem of the *Nibelung*. I constructed

it at a time when my conceptions were employed in building up a hellenic-optimistic world, whose realisation I held completely possible as soon only as mankind wished, wherewith I contrived pretty glibly to get over the problem of why it did not wish. I can now remember how I intentionally created in this sense the individuality of my Siegfried, wishing to portray a life free from misery; still more, however, in the production of the entire *Nibelung-mythos* I thought clearly there would be expounded in the disclosure of the primary wrong how a whole world of wrong arises which, on that ground is destroyed, in order to teach us the lesson to recognise wrong, to root it out and to establish right in its place. But I scarcely noticed how in the work already, indeed fundamentally in the plan, I unconsciously followed a much deeper view, and instead of a phase of life-development, perceived the nature of the world itself in all * its possible phases and recognised its worthlessness out of which naturally, since I kept true to my (intuitive) perceptions but not my (reasoned) conceptions, there came to light something quite different from that which I had conceived. Still I can remember exposing openly my conception only once—as exemplified in the final special pleading declaration which Brünnhilde utters to the bystanders concerning the uselessness of property and the love which alone instils joy, without (alas) ever having clearly understood what this love itself is, which in the course of the *Mythos* so victoriously governs the

* Certainly not in all.

situations. But it was only at this one point that interference of my conceived intentions made me blind. Strange to say, this passage tortured me continuously and it truly required a great revulsion of my reasoned-out conviction, as eventually was effected by Schopenhauer, to discover the ground of my trouble and to provide the truly fitting end to my work, which consists in a candid acknowledgment of the true profound knowledge of things without in any way working towards a preconceived end."

Brünnhilde's declaration of what "love alone can bring" is thus left for the musical drama to suggest to the hearer, and we must turn to a consideration of "guileful bargains, treacherous bonds, and feigning custom's hard decrees," to discover the parallel between the action of Wagner's drama and the conditions of everyday existence.

It must be remembered, whenever the "gods" are spoken of, traditional authority is meant, which in virtue of its lovelessness is bared of moral justification. That is to say, *traditional authority* as we know it in experience. For the idea of authority Wagner has nothing but reverence; although, as intimated, all such ideas merge into one ultimate law—namely, love.

When the conscious intelligence of the world

(Wotan) comes to know that imposed authority is void of this ultimate law, which alone can make existence harmonious, then that authority must collapse in full consciousness of its own defect. That is what happens to Wotan, with his own acquiescence. What he loved, as supreme authority he was forced to condemn. We ask, apart from all consideration of Wagner's work, is there a growing consciousness that authority cannot act up to the standard of morality which we, generally speaking, credit it with, and which it arrogantly claims for itself? Certainly a good deal could be urged to prove the necessary connection between St. Paul's idea of Christianity and the abrogation of the law, and Wagner does this practically in his *Jesus of Nazareth*; but since there is no question of the sinfulness of the flesh, or the recommendation of chastity in the *Nibelung*,* it is better to leave a non-Christian work to find justification in purely secular ideas of justice and injustice. With this idea of chastity a definition of what distinguishes optimism from pessimism is however, necessary, if only to

* At the same time, in the *Art Work of the Future*, 167 (German Edition, *Ges. Sch.* iii. p. 160), a very decided opinion as to the ultimately higher order of non-sensual Love is offered.

show what the *Ring of the Nibelung* is not, or again, in order to make comprehensible wherein *Parsifal* differs from it. Wagner, who rebelled against the limitations which he saw all around hampering and restricting man's energies, who fancied that with the removal of political restrictions the energy inherent in man would attain the desired goal of universal happiness, was compelled to arrest his glorious and fertile imagination in considering the limitation of mind which darkened every attempt at reasoning out the conception of an ultimate prosperity. The limitations of reasoning nipped every flower of imagination in the bud. Just as Wotan was forced by love of his offspring to see the impossibility of man developing his true nature under the laws of which he (Wotan) was the supreme dispenser,—just as this impossibility became clear to him from the stronger of two impulses, the one to acquire might regardless of obligations, the contingent necessity, however, of his authority upholding the obligation of protecting contracts, the unavoidable conclusion that in the carrying out of this necessity the very freedom to give rein to the other impulse, the promptings of love, was more impossible for him than for any

other,—just as all this led to renunciation in order to allow of the free exercise of love, the way leading to a further limitation of the conception of love itself was disclosed. The *Ring* cut down the laws of human action to love; *Parsifal* cut down the law of love to compassion. The *Ring* (optimism) left the senses within the definition of love; *Parsifal* (pessimism) forced from love all sensuous contact. Siegfried kisses Brünnhilde, awakens her, and without the responsibility of conscious action cries "Be mine"; Kundry kisses Parsifal, and a new consciousness awakens in him to cry, "Temptress, forbear." Wotan renounced in order to leave the action in the hands of another and disappear. Parsifal renounces to undertake the action of another and remain. The affirmation of Siegfried has become a negation; the negation of Parsifal becomes an affirmation, which latter, however, in this world can only be stated in words negatively.*

* "Wherefore since this world is the source of our unhappiness, that other world of redemption from it must be precisely as different from this present world as the mode of cognisance whereby we are to perceive that other world must be different from the mode which shows us nothing but this present world of suffering and illusion." *State and Religion*, English translation by Ashton Ellis, vol. iv. of Wagner's Prose Works.

To return now to the question of authority and the idea of love in our existence.

Every action in Wagner's *Ring* drama is justifiable when inspired by love. To leave mere abstraction, this love is for all purposes best explained by devotion for the sake of worth in the object itself, apart from self-interest. Love sanctifies marriage; but the converse, marriage sanctifies love, is not possible as a text for moralists, since it contains a *non sequitur.* Marriage can exist without love, as in the case of Hunding and Sieglinde.

If, then, authority does not correspond to this unselfish designation of love, and if it does not prove itself devoted to the welfare of those whose interests it is its duty to safeguard, it has failed to justify its claim to morality or to command respect. And further, if having found authority deficient, we conclude that the very nature of constituted authority precludes the idea of devotion with which Wagner's idea of love has been characterised, then the failing must still be sought in human nature, since authority is composed of beings possessing the attributes of our common nature. But Wagner took for granted that human nature contained this

essential quality of love, and that only self-imposed restrictions prevented it from distributing universal happiness. To follow this out we must make authority and love convertible terms, which however the whole *Ring* drama controverts. To draw from experience a definition of the abstract term love and call it authority is to raise an unending confusion between the two. As already stated, Brünnhilde could only assert it in negative terms, —"not goods, not gold," etc. The music of the drama, however, does what words cannot do, and thus Wagner left out Brünnhilde's little sermon, and expressed his opinion to Roeckel, "How much of the entire essence of my poetical intention can only become apparent by the music I have now recognised once more. I can scarcely bear to regard the poem without its music." All actual impression of what Wagner meant by love must thus be left to a consideration of the music. There are however many who feel this significance but are incapable of explaining it, because their views of the social question have not run in the same groove as Wagner's, nor have they received enlightenment from the common source of both music and social questions. The difficulty incurred

in trying to unite the abstract idea of love and the practical experience of authority is really not only the background of the *Ring of the Nibelung*, but of our ever existing social question; and it is no wonder, if people do not attempt to explain the import of the drama from Wagner's social surroundings, and from his bent of thought, but mystify themselves and others with mythological pedantry and declare that the drama is inexplicable and confusing.

Our first consideration then must be to discover if, quite apart from Wagner, we find expressions of opinion which regard constituted authority as being in opposition to moral progress. Certainly all liberalism * presupposes this opinion with regard

* To give a clear statement of the opposition of liberalism to conservatism, on its loftiest ground of dispute, let us take Newman and Wagner on the Church, its influence on us and how we have to regard it. In Newman's *History of my Religious Opinions* we find in every page testimony to the need of the Church to teach us Christ's doctrine. It may be summed up in the following words: "I was confident in the truth of a certain definite religious teaching based upon this foundation of dogma—viz. that there was a visible Church with sacraments, rites, which are the channels of invisible grace."

Wagner in a letter of the year 1880 says: "Forasmuch as we without scruple reject church, clericalism, indeed the entire paraphernalia of historical Christianity, let our friends always keep in mind that this takes place for the sake of that Christ whom we

to authority, and all conservatism consists in taking that which is labelled right for right. But good wine is not judged by the label on the bottle; and if a better means exists of finding out the true quality of the wine, then a principle is in use which can be applied to every other labelled commodity: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," says Paul. Alas! even theology and divine right of kings have to be classed under all things. Generally speaking, every attempt to estimate the influence of authority on life results in commending authority. Mr. Lecky says, in *Democracy and Liberty*, vol. i., p. 330, "For the most part the influence of court and aristocracy has been on the side of social purity and financial integrity, though there have been obvious and lamentable exceptions." Mr. Balfour (*Foundations of Belief*, p. 229), "We must not forget that it is authority rather than reason to which in the main we owe not religion only, but ethics and politics." But the mere

wish to preserve to us in His full purity, in His absolute incomparableness and distinctness." See *Wagner Lexicon*, p. 317.

Such are the poles of thought of two of the sincerest men of any time. Can any one question which of the two relieves himself from tortuous methods of trying to explain himself further?

existence of liberalism, which consists in relaxing instead of tightening the strain of constituted authority,* is a standing denial of this assumption. The problem in political life is obscured because the conversatism of to-day is in essence, but not in name, the liberalism of yesterday, and thus the party of reform constantly has to change its name to shake itself free from that clinging, accommodating element in conservatism—especially the conservatism of clericalism—which bends to the ever-growing intellectual situation, when the antiquated ideals have been sucked dry. Conservatism can keep its name but change its skin, and thus plays off on the mind of man a species of mental thimble-rigging, which is obscured on account of the gigantic field of its operations. With this trump card up its sleeve and the slur and disgrace which is always attached to the name newly sought by the party of reform, the pretensions of conservatism are easily advertised. But that undefined spirit, which in more intellectual countries lessens the severity of the wrong done by

* The difference between "ideal authority" and "constituted authority" is the difference between idealism and realism. See *Opera and Drama*, p. 192.

man to man, creeps in by any other door rather than that of court and aristocracy, conservatism and authority.

Consider Mr. Lecky's terms "social purity" and "financial integrity." These are nothing but the abstractions "purity" and "integrity," for no one can suppose that purity and integrity alter as they are applied to various concrete instances. Finance and society may alter, and court and aristocracy may alter; they may be influenced by ideas of integrity and purity, but to assume that finance and society exist in the abstract so as to be on the side of a concrete purity or integrity is as unphilosophical as can be. This being so, how can court and aristocracy, regarded as concretions of individuals, be on the side of abstractions, which as they lose their substance lose their capacity for possessing sides? Abstract and concrete, subject and object are mixed up till all clearness is lost. Again the entire quotations of Mr. Lecky and Mr. Balfour are quantified. "For the most part" and "in the main" are no more the exclusive property of him who wishes to prove the affirmative than of him who wishes to prove the negative. If

these sentences stood "For the most part the influence of court and aristocracy have been on the side of social vice and financial corruption," or "In the main it is to reason rather than authority," etc., who will gainsay the statements? Neither the affirmative nor the negative can be proved from experience. For if each side needs experience to prove it, then as much quantitatively could be said in favour of the one as of the other. Experience—its quantity, that is to say—is not exhausted when one individual has exhausted his knowledge, nor is the opinion offered by the individual anything more than further experience. All history is experience, and if opinion takes the form of a deduction, who has so stated his premises that we can be sure they are correct to permit of a correct deduction? Thus it is evident that on each side opinions will exist as long as there are people to form them, and evidence as long as there is experience to supply it. Nor are Mr. Balfour's methods of opposing reason and authority calculated to provide unbiassed deductions. On p. 195 of the *Foundations of Belief*, in a footnote, he tells us "that he uses Reason in its popular and ordinary sense." Then

we must request him to use Authority in its popular and ordinary sense as well. There is no credit in drawing on the imagination to bolster up the one and on experience to disparage the other. Just as easily could one make out his case for Reason by elevating it into an ideal atmosphere and investing it with abstract ideas of truth, purity, and so on. All that is asked is, if this world's history be drawn on to supply facts for the one, let it be drawn on to supply facts for the other.

To approach more closely to a proper understanding of the problem, let us hear Schopenhauer: "He who of any single thing in the world had an exhaustive knowledge would understand all the remaining world perfectly" (*Basis of Morality*); and "In every microcosm there lies the whole macrocosm, and the latter does not hold more than the former." Tennyson, in his "Flower in the Crannied Wall," expresses the same idea, which is a commonplace of philosophy.* The difference

* Also Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, p. 205:—"For the characteristic and convincing thing about experience is its individual part, the specific, the knowable, which it acquires by being won from the spontaneous dealings of this one specific individual in this one specific case."

between the two procedures is manifest. The one proceeds on an ever-extending research into the relations of things, which are not even stated with due respect for the fundamental obligation attached to philosophy—viz., the different points of view from which we regard and distinguish subject and object, abstract and concrete, ideal and real. The other practically refuses to enter on a wild-goose chase, recognising that every attempt man makes to lay down the law on the moral question has its roots exactly where the question itself has its roots. It is impossible to separate the two so that one can pronounce judgment on the other.

In opposition to Mr. Lecky and Mr. Balfour on their own ground of reasoning, let us take the following. In a speech at Edinburgh, delivered on June 30th, 1892, Mr. Gladstone said :—

"You are told that education, that enlightenment, that leisure, that high station, that political experience are arrayed in the opposing camp, and I am sorry to say that I cannot deny it. I painfully reflect that in almost every one, if not in every one, of the greatest political controversies of the last fifty years, whether they affected the franchise, whether they affected commerce, whether they affected religion, whether they affected the bad and abominable institution of slavery, or what

subject they touched, these leisured classes, these educated classes, these wealthy classes, these titled classes have been in the wrong." (Loud and prolonged cheers, many persons rising and waving hats and handkerchiefs.) *

So the people acquiesced, instead of protesting, and those who go to the *Ring of the Nibelung* thinking they can detach its music from its sources of inspiration, to cheer and applaud it without committing themselves to an opinion, just as much as the Edinburgh audience did, had better either keep quiet or join the ranks of ragged anti-Wagnerism.

In Mr. Gladstone's words, however, we again meet with that quantified assertion, which would lead us to think it can be proved from experience, that at some given period of the world's history this preponderance of influence shifted its balance. Where and when the order of existence inverts itself, from either Mr. Lecky's or Mr. Gladstone's point of view, it is their duty to tell us. Mr. Gladstone says for the last fifty years it has been so in "almost every one if not in every one." Why not definitely undertake to tell us

* *Times* report.

in which one the principle of right so preponderated over the principle of wrong that without fear of contradiction we will all accept it? Or again, these fifty years? Is there anything in the nature of mankind which leaves room for the supposition, if what Mr. Gladstone says is true for fifty years, that fifty-one years ago, or any time before, there is even a remote possibility the inverted order was the rule?

With Mr. Lecky and his "obvious and lamentable exceptions" there is the same difficulty. Who are they and when were they? Mr. Lecky's and Mr. Balfour's idea of authority, to start with, is invested with a moral advantage before morality is explained. The duality of the *sine qua non* of existence is regarded, as if one of the two elements possessed more morality than the other, or as if a resultant of two constituents drew its morality from some determinating factor in the constituents. If oxygen and hydrogen are hopelessly immoral, or if we believe that one is moral and the other immoral, it does not follow *a priori* that water is immoral. What we learn about the resultant again does not permit us to impute similar qualities to the constituents.

Wagner's opinion of the State is as follows:—

"The political state lives solely on the *vices of society*, whose virtues are derived solely from the human individuality. Faced with the vices of society, which alone it can espy, the State cannot perceive the virtues which society acquires from that individuality." *

Laurence Oliphant, with a flash of discernment into the nature of things, says of that institution to which above any other we are readiest to ascribe influence "in the main" for good: "The only monopoly any Church has a right to claim is a monopoly of the errors peculiar to it—what truth it has is generally common to all." † Here we find a just and fair element to be taken into account, which is common to aristocracy, democracy, church, and dissent. We are not confronted with a hopeless and never-ending appeal to experience to ferret out mouldy historical incidents and lay down an absolute law for the future, which never could do more than feed our vanity and flatter our cleverness in getting the better of our neighbour in argument.

That common element is the individual; and

* *Opera and Drama*, vol. ii. of Ashton Ellis's translation of Wagner, Prose Works, p. 193.

† *Scientific Religion*, p. 131.

he who will undertake the task of proving that the prominent individual, whom we cherish as our benefactor, he who has left most distinctly his mark on history, has upheld authority and regarded as a virtue or honour a high place in its temple, and as a vice and disgrace ostracism or burning alive at its hands, must employ a method which will take its lesson neither from logic nor philosophy.

The moral superiority in one out of two individuals, or in one out of two classes, cannot be estimated by confronting one with the other to reckon up the numerical advantages; and the subjective nature of our reason is too much biassed ever to do justice to the qualitative difference in each, wherein the moral question lies. There is another method, and that is to test an individual action by its devotion to the highest principle we know. In accepting the responsibility incurred by filling a position of authority, an individual lays himself under an obligation which demands morally the exact opposite of that line of action which so easily lifts him socially over the heads of his fellow-creatures. Independence is necessary to create the hero,

If now Mr. Lecky's or Mr. Balfour's verdict is favourable to authority, then in a search for the best individual we should have to choose from the ranks of authority. For this purpose we need never go through the wearisome process of comparing, counting, eliminating, etc. All we have to do is to search throughout history for the age when authority was most free to act and democracy least free to hamper it. We may select Nero, Pope Alexander VI., Bloody Mary, or the present Sultan of Turkey. A profusion of select subjects presents itself to our choice, but if we believe in the moral superiority of constituted authority, we must unhesitatingly limit our selection to an age not infested with the degrading influence of democracy.

Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* is also concerned with a search for the best individual; but, instead of adopting the method entailed on us, if we try to fit morality to our sectarian formulas, we find that the best individual arises from an out-and-out repudiation of constituted authority, and Siegfried himself dies when mingling with court and aristocracy, where, by deceit and treachery, his ideal existence is choked under the immoral striving

to attain power in order to satisfy the impulses of egoism. It is only in defying authority that Brünnhilde makes it possible for the ideal power, not prompted by the impulses of egoism, to thrive. From this our conclusions are, that in order to judge whether that action is morally justifiable which exercises power or control over our fellow-creatures, it must be tried at the bar of disinterested devotion to a common principle. But when conventional makeshifts assume the power of harbouring the principle itself, then the very question is begged. How is authority to justify itself if we are convinced that it commits this immoral and illogical act—immoral because it blinds us to the bestowal of the palm on him who merits it, and illogical because it commits the *petitio principii* fallacy? Its means of justification are as effective as Baron Munchausen's, when he pulled himself out of the bog by the hair of his head.

What is all this dispute and conflict about, which seems hardly worth the trouble of maintaining, were it not on the defensive principle of saving our skins and protecting our liberties? What is it that provokes originally a conflict

between man and man and confuses this conflict with some universal sin imposed on our nature by Christianity, and again plunges this deeper aspect of sin into a still greater confusion by having this universal sin preached at us from the mouths of those who are most implicated in stirring up and keeping alive the conflict between man and man? How can the nature of a universal sin be grasped, if we are perpetually face to face with the problem of a man-to-man, class-to-class conflict, where every defensive blow struck, every resentment of provocation, every impetuous act of trying to right the greater wrong is judged as the guilt itself? Have we not this question to consider before meekly and stupidly gaping at accusations of mortal sinfulness and invitations to accept salvation at the hands of those who on their own confession—though that is scarcely necessary—are as guilty as ourselves? Who really takes a church for religion, a law court for justice, court and aristocracy for the rule of the best? With every advance in democracy the struggle against inequality is fought out on a less brutal platform. At one time our brothers' skins were ripped open, now it is only our

brothers' vices. It is almost universally accepted as a fact that the commercial interests now occupying men's minds provide the best safeguard against war; and with this comparatively humane stage of existence to live in, we are called on to approach with reverence the present-day emaciated spectre of authority, as if the change arose from magnanimous and heroic renunciation on the part of individuals or classes that were in possession of some rightful property. One tendency in human nature, its cruelty, deprived of power to satiate its hunger, smiles with the warmth of benevolence, and weeps over the picture of degraded mortals refusing more and more to connect their ideas of religion with the rule of the past. Those who see the smile on the face and the tear in the eye of the tiger—be he prelate or monarch—only if he has lain down with the lamb inside of him or if with drawn teeth and pared claws he dances to the tune of democracy, will not take long to decide whether power is to be restored to him again. Aristocracy hates democracy because it recognises its master, in whose presence it must perform the scraps of its antics before it gets its bread

In studying the *Ring of the Nibelung* it must be kept in mind, then, that we are concerned with the social question of right and wrong, and that in its solution can alone be found sure ground for discoursing on the profounder problem of any sin inherent in our nature. People do not cover their defects by gathering under the cloak of court or church, any more than the ostrich hides himself when he puts his head in the sand.

Apart from Wagner's, then, we have Laurence Oliphant's and Mr. Gladstone's testimony, which doubtless expresses the feelings of many who have never considered the question, but who instinctively feel that authority—above all, clerical authority—is not "for the most part" or "in the main" so imbued with morality that we are obliged unhesitatingly to confer on it the merit of harbouring and administering that spirit which lightens the injustice of man to man.

To Wagner's work we turn for some further testimony to strengthen these ideas.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHARACTERS.

ALL the characters are incorporations of ideas which at all times maintain themselves in the relations of the affairs of mankind. Wagner has called Wotan "the sum of the intelligence of the present," and as this intelligence is always aware that its present state of evolution must give way to a more worthy, Wotan cannot be regarded as an incorporation of one idea, but the idea itself, arrived at through consciousness. Loge is the spirit of malice, ever leading into more complicated straits. The Rhine daughters are the innocence of nature before the gold was taken from the Rhine to become an object to desire, and the Norns spin the thread of life as man weaves it. All the other characters work towards an end, or influence those who do—namely, the possession of supreme authority. This authority is unworthy or worthy as its object is selfish or unselfish. It

also is a future always to be attained or striven for, and the only glimpse of a realisation of the ideal power is given in the scenes between Brünnhilde and Siegfried in the last act of *Siegfried* and the prelude to the *Dusk of the Gods.*

The characters divide themselves into three grades or castes, which reproduce themselves on the earth as ideas. Each grade divides itself into two types. The Nibelungs work beneath the ground, and are the toilers, without any command over the result of their labour. They are under the rule of a master whose mastery is so sordid and egoistic as to shut out completely the feeling of love. They are slaves, and it is not their nature to aspire to anything unselfish. Drudgery is their life. It is usual to make them represent the proletariat, but this is a proof of how completely Wagner is misunderstood. The Nibelungs are slaves to the sordid passion of egoism, and are more likely to be found in what we facetiously term the "upper classes" than in the lower, since possession is a *sine quâ non* of egoism. The division is represented by Aberich and Mime. The first knows no compromise in his envy and hatred, the second possesses the gift of diplomacy,

or the art of working towards a base or false end by ingratiating himself by means of smiles, endearing terms, and self-recommendation.

The Giants work on the surface of the earth. Their intelligence leads them to work for wages and nothing else. What they do is done by contract, and they recognise dishonesty in non-fulfilment of the contract. Their knowledge goes no further. It is a step above the Nibelungs, but it knows no glimmer of generosity. Fasolt, however, for his own gratification is susceptible to the charms of womanhood. Hunding represents his type in the *Valkyrie.* Here is to be detected the germ of a benefit bestowed by the giant race on their enemies, since Siegmund is by usage and the conventional laws of hospitality, but not by good feeling, protected or sheltered for the night. This, as nearly as possible, represents the state our age has arrived at, and a certain additional amount of Mime's diplomacy and politeness serves to magnify a very small quantity of conventional hospitality into mountains of magnanimity, by means of which we exact lifelong devotion and humility from simple souls whose powers of perception have not learnt to distinguish the actions of the heart from

those of the head. Fafner, the other type, keeps to the purely material side of the bargain.

The Gods dwell on the hilltops, and possess the divine quality of enriching life from no thought of gain to themselves or of exacting promises and rewards. The gods are man, and not any power outside man, except what we find in nature. But the further attainment of power had become tainted with the bargaining methods of the lower class, and as a step still lower was reached when Wotan identified himself with the lowest forms of egoism, the evil was wrought which could not be righted except by the re-birth of the spirit which was created outside the bonds of contract or absolute egoism. Fricka and Wotan form the different types of godly rule; the first, blinded by laws, unable to perceive wherein lies the power to counteract the evil wrought, the other representing the intelligence of nature, which to us would be religion if our religious fervour allowed us to digest our gnats before swallowing camels.

ERDA.

Wotan. "All-knowing eternal wisdom,
Erda, Erda, immortal woman.

* * * *

All life that is, thy spirit stirs,
All brains that brood thy thought inspires."
Siegfried, Act III.

Erda is the wisdom inherent in human nature. When the baneful egoistic impulse seems to be on the point of overwhelming everything, and infesting all life with the poison of its hatred, there arises in man a sense of dignity which rebels against the continued abuse of the divine principle in him, and restores the grievously disordered condition to its normal state. When Wotan in the Rhinegold is about to prostrate authority under the rule of filthy lucre, and therewith deprive it of its last trace of worthiness, Erda, the spirit of wisdom, arises to save the world from this last overwhelming disaster.

Scientifically considered she is the tendency towards equilibration. Evil can never completely gain the mastery. The most violent oscillations tend to a state of equilibrium. Mr. Spencer, in "First Principles," speaks of this law of equilibration, as follows:—

"There is a progress towards equilibration between the relations of thought and the relations of things. This equilibration can only end when each relation of

things has generated in us a relation of thought such that on the occurrence of the conditions the relation in thought arises as certainly as the relation in things. Supposing this state to be reached, experience will cease to provide any further mental evolution—there will have been reached a perfect correspondence between ideas and facts, and the intellectual adaptation of man to his circumstances will be complete" (p. 505).

Thus wisdom, which prevents man's egoism from utterly destroying his divine nature, can only arise when such a danger arises. Wisdom to make herself observed must be preceded by a state which has arisen from want of her presence. In the *Rhinegold* Erda arises herself. In *Siegfried* Wotan, on the point of consciously parting with his power to Siegfried, when, that is to say in Mr. Spencer's words, a state is reached in which a perfect correspondence between ideas and facts and the intellectual adaptation of man to his circumstances is complete, calls Erda up. She has no cause to arise here spontaneously. Her wisdom wanes before Wotan's will,* that is, his wish that an authority founded on conventionality should give place to one founded on love. Ideas and facts

* See *Siegfried*, Act III., scene between Wotan and Erda.

have become one reigning wisdom. The condition has arrived which needs no interposition of Erda to restore the balance; she has been incorporated with fact. Thus Wotan's last words to her are—

"Then sleep thou now, close fast thine eyes,
Dreaming, behold mine end.
Whatever they shall work to the ever young
In gladness the god gives way.
Sink then, Erda; eternal fear,
Eternal care, to endless sleep,
Descend! Descend!"

In short, Erda is that eternal fear or care which never permits of man's egoistic nature overriding his altruistic. In life every revolution is the revenge of Nature for a wrong done to her. Here our analogy ceases, for in the nature of things the revenge more or less oversteps the mark of wisdom and becomes itself the cause of reaction.

The spirit of the Reformation is quite of the same character as the rising of Erda in the *Rhinegold.* There was the same attempt to get possession of power by authority, subjecting itself to the greed of gold. The better spirit rebelled, and was willing to renounce such a claim to authority.

WOTAN.

Alberich. "Give good heed, thou haughty god:
If I have sinned
I sinned but against myself.
But against all that was,
Is, and will be,
Eternal one, sinnest thou
If thou shamelessly steal my ring."

Rhinegold.

Erda. "Who taught defiance scourges defiance.
Who roused the deed is wroth with the deed.
The defender of right, the guardian of truth,
Resists the right, tho' falsehood reigns!"

Siegfried.

Within the above quotations the tragic position of Wotan lies. In the first Alberich utters words the meaning of which, if authority can be arraigned, is deeply significant. The same action committed by a responsible being begets a guilt of its own not incurred when committed by an irresponsible being. The responsibility of the latter dies with him, or is condoned by punishment or repentance; but in authority it lives, handed down from representative to representative, till that authority itself is annihilated. It pollutes everything it professes

to safeguard. In the second Erda interrogatively states the problem which Wotan in the *Valkyrie* relates to Brünnhilde, "All that I must love I must leave, destroy whatever is dear, basely betray him who trusts in me."

Wotan is cursed with a fate which compels him to condemn that which he loves. His primary weakness, that is to say, the susceptibility of the gods to decay and corruption, lies in the fact of his being bound by a pledge to Fricka. Nature does not heed pledges. She demands full scope for her actions, and as the intelligence of man progresses, adherence to the pledges incurred in the past ages drags mankind back from its goal. Wotan endeavours to win the world. His aspiration was prompted by worthy motives, and had an ideally perfect aim in view, but this was sullied because he was bound. Fricka wanted Walhalla to bind Wotan closer to her side. Wotan wanted it as a security from whence he could rule the world, but for all this he could not turn from love.* Among the people of the earth the divine

* See *Valkyrie*, Act II., scene between Wotan and Brünnhilde: "But still from love I could not turn, in my might I longed for love."

principle had to be implanted which first was meant to provide heroes to guard Walhalla, and later would foster that free, unpledged individual who eventually, in virtue of his freedom, and not from any conscious desire that he had to struggle against some infirmity, would bring peace to the world.

Wotan's worthy desire thus entailed infidelity to Fricka; but the immorality which lay in this infidelity was only the immorality of breaking a pledge, which itself again was the immorality breeding all the lesser ones, resulting from the bondage of human nature.

Constituted authority regarded the keeping of the pledge as a moral act. In a lower caste of society this might have sufficed, but the gods needed some higher guidance. Nature demanded freedom not only to redeem itself from the position it had drifted into, but also for the production of conditions for a future life in which all the evil resulting from bondage would be avoided, since no pledges nor bargains would exist to force mankind to conform to what was contrary to its nature.

But Wotan, as ruler of the world of convention,

had to recognise in his offspring of love the fruits of lawlessness; which means that a world still hampered by the conception of morality founded on bargain, regarded anything born outside its conditions of formality and not ranging itself under the restraints of convention, wrong. If we are to state Wotan's intelligent opinion, we would say this much, that this course of making morality depend on the limitations of a previous age precluded the possibility of pure morality instead of providing it with a home; while on the other hand, where love directed the act, it could never shame its own promptings or poison its own source. Herein, then, we are led to the tragic conflict in Wotan's mind. He had no choice between the two without defeating his own ends. If he did not judge his own children then he stood condemned himself, for he carried on the rule of the world in the spirit which invited condemnation of his own acts committed outside the pale of law; but prompted by the only impulse which could implant the higher instincts belonging to the gods in an earthly race. But these acts which led to infidelity were no sensual evil-inspired acts of selfishness, but the disinterested actions of the

nobler impulse.* The nobler impulse was not yet ruling the world. Wotan had to condemn what he loved. A tragic situation every one will admit, but unintelligible to those who have never got so far as to ask if morality governs the actions of authority as constituted by tradition.

In Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston* a somewhat similar problem remained to be solved. There, however, the judge delighted in the number of criminals which he had been the means of sending —under God, of course—to the gallows. But when circumstances forced him to condemn to death his son, who, let it be noted, rebelled against the official brutality of his father, this judge succumbed. At that point human nature—what Wagner calls love—asserted itself. The judge loved his son, and having to condemn him died.† Wotan, then, is the intelligence recognising its divinest impulse, but unable to practise it owing to the accumulations of past traditions. He in his

* See the *Nachgelassene Schriften und Dichtungen* of Wagner (Breitkopf & Härtel), in "Jesus von Nazareth," p. 80 *seq.*, where it is shown that the egoistic principle in man is dispelled by providing for the future race. Egoism pertaining to the individual destroyed itself in the exercise of the duties owed to the community.

† See also in chap. iv. of this book Wagner's account of the Œdipus myth.

individual capacity was free to act, but the act was borne down and condemned by the responsibilities of his official capacity. Every man has the privilege of exercising the natural desires common to all; but if, like Wotan, they isolate themselves in order to rule, then responsibilities gather thick around them.

Wotan aspired to leaven the world by implanting in it the divine impulse, and he found that the way to do this was to disregard the commonplaces of conventionalism. He, however, was compelled to be the first to maintain the obligations attached to agreements. For if authority does not set the example of the law it professes to uphold, it must totter and fall of its own incapacity. Therein we see the obdurateness of the law, which knows no clemency, but rigidly proclaims the sanctity of contract and the guilt of non-fulfilment. Portia could only appeal to the individual, Shylock, to be merciful, but the law could not do anything on the claim of mercy. An act of kindness in the individual is a precedent no one would fear to quote; in the law to suggest it is enough to have it brushed aside as impossible. Authority to be pure should not be so constituted

that the veriest scoundrel in the land can dictate to it its duty, as Alberich did to Wotan and Shylock to Portia with manifest consistency. To be pure it must draw its claims for reverence from sources which are above the reach of those it rules. The cause of Wotan's incapacity to exercise the aims of pure authority was the subordination of this pure aim to egoistic purposes. This had been irretrievably brought about by the forcible seizure of Alberich's gold and the payment therewith of the debt owing to the giants Fasolt and Fafner. Gold, in its degraded employment as an end to itself, to obtain mastery over others who have no higher instincts, is that which lowers everything to the lowest level of life. In delighting the eye it remains an object of innocence; in exciting the desire so as to render man envious of the other who possesses it, it entails the pursuit of evil and precludes the possibility of fostering the spirit of good even when the ruling individual has given birth to this spirit.

Wotan seeing his inability to protect the divine spirit which he had implanted on the earth, having heard the voice of wisdom and having drunk the cup of shame, becomes aware that in order to

maintain the manly, vigorous youthfulness of love which authority had tainted with the poison of egoism, he must leave this spirit to work out its own and the world's salvation. His intelligence, which demanded the assistance of the spirit it gave birth to, now finds it must denounce its own offspring. Brünnhilde born of intelligence and wisdom, Siegmund and Sieglinde born of intelligence and love which were to fight on their own ground the dreaded mastery of egoism, had to be renounced and condemned by the spirit which gave birth to them. Does any one consider this a false picture of our age? The very simplest example will convince those who have not committed themselves to that primary blunder of taking the articles of the narrow sect into which they are born for objective truth. Let us suppose a bishop of the Church of England who has a son brought up to the service of the Church. This son is led by the force of his own convictions to disregard certain ceremonies considered by the authorities of the Church to be essential bonds between their Church and the religion of Christ. Our bishop's son cannot reconcile the gorgeousness and pretensions of the Church with the simplicity

and meekness of Christ. The son refuses to carry out, and the Church insists on the fulfilment of its practices. The father has to judge the case. Must not two feelings arise in this bishop's and father's breast—one, love for his son; the other, duty to his Church? Assuredly duty would carry the day, and the son would go under, while the Church would become prouder of its faithful servant. Doubtless there are people who would consider this morally right. Those are the admirers of barren Fricka and brutal Hunding. Every individual who has to sacrifice his natural love to the demands of officialism is in Wotan's position. He who admits the higher merit of following out his disinterested love, instead of murdering it to uphold a vanity-ministering ceremonial institution, having its roots in the forcible seizure of the property of another similar concretion of conventionalities, can sympathise with Wotan in his lament over the enforced submission to Fricka.

Fricka. "Mocked at by men,
Stripped of our might,
The gods were for aye o'erthrown,
Were to-day my right,

Radiant and pure.
By thy warrior's maid not avenged,
The Volsung falls for my honour.
Do I win from Wotan the oath?"

Everything prompted by devotion that comes into opposition with Fricka's idea of honour has to fall. Such are the conditions of maintaining conventionalism. Wotan gives the oath. Nothing but anarchy stares him in the face if judicial revenge is not perpetrated on Siegmund for his act of sacrilege at the altar of coercive and lustful wedlock. So far the deed has not been done which so thoroughly defies conventionalism as to permit of the safe birth of the spirit whose actions are in accord with the lovingness of nature. Fricka typifies that conservative spirit which never can comprehend how outside of its pale something better exists than ever it could give birth to. So shut up in its barren egoism and self-conceit, it maintains that everything which can be done for mankind is provided for within its bounds, and that only patience, self-control, and subordination are necessary to effect the needful reform. To dispute with it is to insult it, and to denounce it

is to receive summary punishment. As Wotan says to Fricka :—

> "Naught hast thou learned,
> Though fain I had taught thee;
> What thou wilt ne'er apprehend,
> Until day has dawned on the deed."

The last line is specially significant. When the spirit which, having defied orthodoxy spreads its benefit around, orthodoxy quietly appropriates the merit as belonging to it and to the blind mass of people who, when they do read history read it upside down, proclaims that it never offered opposition, or that its real *ex-cathedra* judgment is contemporary with the capacity of the people to accept it. Fricka's indignation is greatly increased by the fact that Wotan's lawless and roving offspring were not born and bred within the precincts of respectability and holy honour. That these offspring were guided by their instinctive higher nature was unintelligible to Fricka. It is incomprehensible to her that the battle of manhood against egoism is fought wherever egoism is met, that among the toilers of the earth, in the dust and sweat of every-day life, meeting at every step with opposition and

defeat, there thrives the spirit which endures. We are not accustomed to find the genius of man born in palaces and high places. In one case a stable provided the necessary shelter, and it is not the custom of reverential thought to consider that disgrace was attached to that fact; but, on the contrary, that it was fitting with the life led and doctrine taught. To this doctrine our modern authority is committed, and at present it is trying to thrive on the principle of hunting with the hounds and running with the hare. Just as Wotan, for want of adherence to those principles which alone render authority worthy, had to renounce, so must our pseudo-Christianity give place to something more worthy.

Certainly the consummation will not be effected according to the *dénouement* of Wagner's drama. That last quoted line,

> "Until day has dawned on the deed,"

means in our life that every day dawns on the deeds of unselfishness from which our authority sucks its vitality. Every good deed is capable of being manipulated so as to appear, eventually

if not immediately, in the livery of authority. Some momentous questions are now coming to the front, which, from our point of view, seem absolutely subversive of all clericalism. But little doubt need be entertained that the subtlety which has turned the flank of past contradictions will not be unequal to the difficulties about to be presented.* Everything is possible to him who waits, and the Church in all its forms knows how to wait since that has become its means of defence. Like the Jew, when parties are opposing each other, it knows how to buy up depreciated property.

FREIA, FROH.

Freia is love, Froh is spring. The first is the element needed to preserve the perpetual youth of the gods. These two represent the pure divine spirit which later in the struggle against egoism is carried on by Siegmund and Sieglinde.

* It is one of Schopenhauer's assertions, adopted by Wagner, that the true division of religions lies in the fact of their being optimistic or pessimistic. Judaism and Christianity are therefore antagonistic. This is bound to be accepted by many people. How will the Church decide?

FAFNER AND FASOLT.

Fafner. "Lass mich schlafen."—*Sieg.*, Act xi.

The giants have to receive payment for their work. They built Walhalla according to a bargain, and by that bargain Wotan has to abide. Freia was promised in payment, which was an obligation arising from the circumstances of the case. It meant that if the god failed to requite them, his word being broken, authority dealt itself a death-blow. Its perennial source was dried up. Wotan could now exist only on bargains. Loge, the spirit of mischief and craft, had promised to get the god something wherewith to appease the giants. This was Alberich's gold, which Loge said could now be robbed from Alberich without incurring the renunciation of love which Alberich so readily had renounced in order to gain the gold. The god thereby incurred deeper responsibilities instead of settling any, and the last humiliation would have been the keeping of the ring—that is, the complete degradation of authority to the slavery of egoism. From this he was saved by the voice

of that spirit which guards the world from such disaster.

Fasolt and Fafner have a tragedy to themselves on the same lines on which the whole drama is built—namely, that the good must succeed before the evil, so long as authority itself is impregnated with egoism. Fasolt is susceptible to charms of grace and beauty, while Fafner alone thinks of the evil which the gods will suffer if Freia is taken from them; or, if the gold is to be their recompense, of the power it will bestow on him. Consequently, when the inevitable struggle for the possession of the gold arrives, Fafner claims it all for himself, with complete justice telling Fasolt that if Freia had been won he would have had no share in her. Fasolt demands a share of the gold, but is advised by Loge to keep hold of the ring alone. Having forced this from Fafner, he turns his back to gaze fatuously on its glittering charms, when Fafner strikes him down, and, having possessed himself of the ring and hoard, departs. His future is that of a solitary miser, who, in the shape of a dragon, guards his treasure till the advent of Siegfried, when he is slain in turn.

ALBERICH—HAGEN.

Hagen. "Who shall inherit
The might of the gods?
Alberich. I—and thou
Shall inherit the world,
If in thy truth
I may put my trust,
If thou share my wrath and hate."
—*Dusk of the Gods*, Act ii.

Alberich is hatred and envy and coercion. With power of gold to propagate greed and to raise up a force to cope with the divine spirit born of love, he had allured a woman, who bore him a son. Hagen is represented as born out of conventional wedlock, for to Wagner the idea of true wedlock was synonymous with love. One end animates the existence of Alberich and Hagen. Alberich had been robbed of the gold by Wotan who requited the giants with it. To win this gold back from the hero who has won it from the giants is Hagen's mission. This is to be accomplished by treachery and deceit. Siegfried is unconscious of the power of the gold, and is consequently powerless if attacked unawares.

MIME.

Mime. "When thy sight grows dim,
And the firm ground fails,
With beating heart
In thy fretful breast,
Thou wilt thank me then who led thee,
And remember Mime's love."

Siegfried, Act ii.

Siegfried was to fall back on Mime's loving-kindness when his own strength failed him; he who welded the sword which Mime could not weld, he whose innocence allowed him to read the very secrets of nature, because innocence and nature were identical, was to look back with gratification on this malformation which posed as the indispensable refuge and inspiring fountain-head of Siegfried's intelligence.

As Siegfried's bringer-up, Mime takes a place in the drama suggestive of much, for we have to find a parallel in experience for this accoucheur, fosterer, and shelterer of the individual who bore to victory the divine instinct in man. Mime is a fawning diplomat. He smiles and cajoles when he is contriving the meanest of his tricks. He is continually telling Siegfried how much he owes his

Mime, with what unwearied devotion he was fed and warmed by him, and how basely * Siegfried rewards him. None of Mime's lifelong devotion inspires Siegfried with thankfulness.† Siegfried is the child of love, whose instincts lead him right without the necessity of reflection. Sings Mime :—

> "For thee, aye in trouble,
> In pain but for thee,
> I wear myself out."

Among the endeavours to free the world from that false view of man's position and relation to nature, none are more worthy of honour than those of men devoted to science. The wearing-out process which Mime claimed to undergo for Siegfried's benefit, in the eyes of some scientific men falls on the searchers for truth ‡ and not on

* It will always be a matter of curiosity that even the acute Schopenhauer, though he seems to have read the *Ring* with some care, marked Siegfried's dislike of Mime with "emporender Undank" (revolting ingratitude) on the margin of his copy.

† It is interesting to note here what were Wagner's opinions on thankfulness. This is to be found in "Jesus of Nazareth," and will be commented on in the next chapter.

‡ Huxley wrote : "If I had to choose, I would prefer to be a descendant of a humble monkey, rather than of a man who employs his knowledge and eloquence in misrepresenting those who are wearing out their lives in the search for truth."—Quoted from *White's "Warfare of Science with Theology,"* I., p. 70.

those who smugly think they are in possession of it, who, as Mime affects, unite in one body the father and mother of intellectual growth. To Siegfried, Mime is the bungler who can never provide him with that which he needs, but who is always undertaking to do so, fearful of the day when Siegfried can provide his own needs, but fatuously confident that he will then be able to turn this eventful occasion to his own account. There is no end to Mime's diplomacy as long as he lives. Siegfried has to be brought up to effect that which Mime himself cannot do. That is to say, the inherent intellect and devotion of man is used to serve another purpose than to benefit its bearer. Fafner, the lazy spirit of selfishness, possesses the gold. Siegfried alone has strength to slay this spirit, therefore Mime fosters Siegfried so that he in innocence can bring this about. In other words, the loving nature born of the spirit of devotion has to be subjected to an interested and selfish purpose, and this can only be effected by keeping alive a false version of the birth of this intelligence. Mime is thus that spirit which superficially appears as the educator of mankind, and when intelligence begins to perceive

that nature is its true educator and the other a mere charlatan, with which it has nothing in common, then craft and subterfuge are called into requisition in order to turn this step, leading to a truer knowledge of things, into the further service of self-interest. Mime is thus the craft which finds its best soil in the Church, impressing every one in early youth, before judgment is ripe, with the belief that it is a spiritual father and mother.* In our drama, however, the divine spirit in man was born before Mime's help was needed, and would not have been lost if Mime had not figured at the birth of the last bearer of that spirit.

In the everlasting dispute as to which forms the real Church, the following words of Huxley have a strong bearing on what Wagner's drama suggests—namely, that the birth and growth of religion in man is in spite of the Church and not in virtue of it. Following out Newman's assertion that to be "deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant," Huxley says he has not a

* See *Siegfried*, Act I. Mime (in great embarrassment): "Thou must believe whatever I tell thee—I am thy father and mother in one." Siegfried: "'Tis thou must give me to know who are my father and mother?" Mime (retreating from him): "What father? What mother? Idle questions!"

shadow of doubt as to the truth of Newman's anti-Protestant epigram, and continues: "But I have as little that in the same sense the Christianity of history is not Romanism, and that to be deeper in history is to cease to be a Romanist" . . . "and as he (Newman) rejects Protestantism on the ground of its incompatibility with history, so *a fortiori* I conceive that Romanism ought to be rejected." *

The increasing disregard for the Church arises in the same manner as Siegfried's contempt for Mime's claims to be his father and his mother.

In the second act, after the bird has told Siegfried not to trust the unworthy Mime, which to us expresses Siegfried's close sympathy with nature and the power of intuitively reading its secrets, Mime approaches Siegfried with a drink, as he says, to refresh him, at the same time telling him of his intention of poisoning him with it. The instant Siegfried repeats to him this avowed declaration Mime indignantly contradicts it, only to recommence his disclosures again. Since Siegfried has been warned by the bird of Mime's treachery, there is evidently no reason why he

* *Controverted Questions, Agnosticism and Christianity*, pp. 480-2.

should learn of Mime's intention from his own mouth. What then is meant by this fatuous declaration of Mime, telling to Siegfried's face what Siegfried knows already? Nothing more than the simplest mind may read, provided that mind is not bound to the service of conventional religion and orthodox presumption. Mime's position is that of utilising the natural intelligence in mankind to his own end. In this respect he represents a body, which in life is made up of individuals, each one able to express his individual opinion apart from the accepted and pre-arranged sectarian opinion which seeks to make one body out of many opinions. If two individuals belonging to this one body express divergent opinions on one subject, then the conviction is born to the independent mind that no matter how they may unite to present one front to their common enemy, there is in reality no affirmative bond between them which may not equally well belong to what opposes them. Beyond a mere temporary sinking of the differences for the time being, the individuals making up one professed body are as subject to the law of differentiation as any other

thing in nature. A body cannot be formed out of heterogeneous elements which is not resolvable into its constituent parts. So, unless no difference of opinion exist, a body is not united in any proper sense of the word. A Church, for instance, made up of people who disagree as to whether the Reformation produced a new body or remained the true existing one merely divested of some encumbrances, is not one Church at all. It needs no more special learning to tell us this, than it needs to tell us that one and the same man cannot be in two places at once. This expresses the meaning of Laurence Oliphant's words: "The only monopoly a Church has a right to claim, is a monopoly of the errors which are peculiar to it,—what truth it has is generally common to all." When a body, then, is formed which professes to have some exclusive bond of unity, unshared by other bodies, then that bond of unity, the more exclusive its nature, the less is it an intrinsic part of religion; and independent observers judge of a Church's pretensions by its unanimity from within, not from its outward opposition to some dozen other bodies professing in the abstract what it professes.

The mind which detects this inherent flaw—namely, that that which binds individuals into sects, is opposition to others—not conformity to exclusive truth—dares not consistently make use of it unless it is not committed to the same fallacy. Freedom is the first qualification for unity; it is its baptism of fire.

Mime now represents one body with conflicting views. Thus in the same breath he refutes himself without in any way knowing he does so, just as the contradictions of the Church members refute unity without apparent knowledge of what is therewith implied.

But to Siegfried's powers of perception Mime's assertions and contradictions are as palpably conveyed as are to ours the assertions and contradictions of two individuals within one body. That on which all individuals are agreed becomes common property. Call it God, love, authority, or reason, it is as much the subject-matter of the *Ring of the Nibelung* as of any other work. Wagner calls it love, and keeps to it. Churches and their *protégés* call it whichever name suits the particular instance of imposition about to be inflicted.

There is an abstract truth to be realised. This

is only possible through the individual, and that individual cannot rake it out of the divisions and bickerings of sects. It is they who appropriate what good they have from the individual. As happened to Mime, the Church, with an eye on its own welfare at the expense of the individual, has to be slain by the intellect. In our actual life this slaying proceeds by inches, and it is a purely mental operation. But the nature of life allows the individuals in the Church never to show signs of defeat and disgrace. Rejuvenated from the source they try to tread underfoot, they wear their smile of injured innocence or outraged dignity, and like Mime cry—

> "With the selfsame weapon he won for himself,
> I will clear him out of my path
> And win me both ring and hoard."

SIEGMUND AND SIEGLINDE.

Wotan. "What so evil wrought the pair
Whom Spring in love has joined;
Love's enchantment enraptured them,
I rule not where love reigns."

Valkyrie, Act II.

Siegmund and Sieglinde are the windmill of quixotic anti-Wagnerian wrath and indignation.

Here, at any rate, says the outraged conventionalist, cheated of his other attempts to damage Wagner, decency is cast to the winds and an unconscious sin in the *mythos* is *deliberately** turned into a conscious sin in the drama.

Some of Wagner's critics, it is true, show no knowledge of a higher dramatic law than that of making the action of a drama conform to the theory of morals which fits sectarian views. Some there are, however, who, if Wagner had sinned against this first and most comprehensive of all dramatic obligations, would never have wearied of using such a violation of procedure to his detriment. Thus between ignorance and misrepresentation Wagner has no chance. Since Wagner left morality to be implied from his drama, instead of

* See *Musical Times* for July 1896, under gossip entitled "Facts, Rumours, and Remarks," it was rumoured *deliberately* that Wagner "*deliberately* adopted the conscious incest and ignored the unconscious Scandinavian version of the legend." Is this of course *deliberately* untrue? What we have to learn from this is that the writer who *deliberately* saw his way to add one more untruth to the heap, was prompted to do so by some—in his mind—incomplete evidence in the *Church Times* as to the immorality of Wagner's plays. Though the next number of the *Church Times* had a letter in which the unconsciousness of the act in the legend was contradicted, rumour was not concerned to rectify its misstatement deliberately. Rumour once more proved herself a lying jade.

subjecting his drama to some narrow confused view of it, the attack has to be carried on, on different lines, before an indifferent audience, for all the persuasion of critics will no more convince people that the *Valkyrie* is not beautiful than that *Lohengrin* has not melody. The lingering doubts will as surely be dissipated in the case of the *Valkyrie* as they were dissipated in the case of *Lohengrin*.

There lurks behind the perpetual challenge thrown out to defend the *Valkyrie*, a desire to attribute to the defence a gloating akin to that which is said to exist when we listen even to a performance on the concert platform of the first Act of the *Valkyrie*—namely, the satisfaction of gloating over unlawful love; only a more obnoxious expression is used, with evident satisfaction to the critic that he is provided with an opportunity of using it.

The dramatic incident really stands thus. The dramatist cannot proceed on absolute lines. If he shows up the inner working of life, he has to conform to the relativeness of life; and if no gleam of insight into the nature of things is evoked by regarding the drama as a whole, then each individual can certainly draw as much as he needs out of the drama to suit his particular view, just as he

can from history. This, however, is done by suppressing the consideration of the opposing testimony. That it is easy to see where Wagner's sympathy lay, is just as much as to say that it is easy to recognise wherein lay the impulse to write such a work. The consciousness of the true dramatist, however great, does not influence the plain delineation of the conflicting elements in social life. Wagner began his drama with the subject of the death of his ideal hero, and in working back to lay bare the source of the social evil he did not undermine the artistic inspiration. Our sense of right is strengthened, not weakened, by the clear delineation of wrong. To attribute the exigencies of the drama, which do not conform with our standard of morality, to a wilful perversion of morality is merely to quarrel with what provides the elements of the drama.

So far, then, those who conceive that Siegmund and Sieglinde are rightfully punished will find enough to gratify their demand for retribution. Their morality instead of being shocked should find a most powerful aid. But this is not what we believe Wagner had at heart in working out the drama of Wotan. Subject the work to some

principle underlying all Wagner's life, and it will be found that everything in the drama points to the support of an opposite view. Keeping in mind the relative conditions which govern the whole, recognising the necessary conflict of two opposing forces, with their fountain-head in Wotan himself, we see in Siegmund and Sieglinde the victims of a perverted and immoral condition of affairs which, with reference to their special case and that of Hunding, lies in the fact that they were inspired to a union by love, while Hunding's union with Sieglinde was one of lust and coercion. Wagner's extraordinary belief in the inherent goodness of nature is nowhere more implicitly expressed than in the way he makes the union of Wotan and Fricka, Hunding and Sieglinde barren, while all the divine spirit arises, as if spontaneously, as soon as the hampering conditions are thrown to the winds. Siegmund and Sieglinde are the bearers of the divine instinct which Wotan, from the unfettered side of his nature, had implanted in the world. This idea is carried out with perfect artistic lucidity. All Siegmund's recital to Hunding and Sieglinde is the story of the perse-

cution of the unselfish spirit in man. See how he at once begins to relate the misfortunes which befell him, and then the opposition he found to his idea of good. Finally, he tells how he sought to rescue a maid whose kinsmen were about to compel her to marry a man whom she did not love. Would not Sieglinde be interested in this recital of her own case, and would not her heart go out to a man who could show sympathy with her, as well as with the maid of whom he told his story? Would not Hunding feel that here was his enemy, who revealed himself by showing his sympathy for Sieglinde, without ever even mentioning her name or her special case? All through Siegmund's recital we see the unselfish spirit which, then as now, suffers persecution when it challenges accepted theories of morality and religion. Those who half-heartedly understand the poem, and in defending it never question whether our customs and marriage laws are so morally and divinely constituted that, protected by such laws, people can afford to condemn Siegmund's and Sieglinde's union, throw a sop to Cerberus in order to tone down their boldness. No sop is wanted. There is not in our customs one single

trait worth preserving to which violence is done in Wagner's drama. The whole underlying principle of the work is the subjugation of all bonds and unions to one of love; and this principle was not to be spread on earth by unions where love did not compel the union. People should try to treat Wagner as a poet.

It is a travesty of Wagner's thought to consider the fate of Siegmund and Sieglinde as a moral judgment for their sins. It is a historical judgment arising from immoral and egoistic conditions. Their fate is the same as awaited Brünnhilde, and at every stage of human history awaits, with, it is true, less and less manifestations of brutality, all individuals who attempt to teach authority a lesson in morality. There must be some veil over the eyes of those who do not see this lesson in Christ's death. So difficult is it for a person to free himself from prejudice, that most hearers and readers of the *Valkyrie* conceive that Sieglinde's frenzy in the second act, and her appeals to Siegmund to "leave the accursed one," arise from shame and guilt in uniting herself to Siegmund. Wagner's lines, however, are quite explicit, and prove that the guilt lay in her having

been "thrall to the man who held her unloved as his own." She had defiled the holy instinct of love by contact with a lower caste. It is easy to see why even Wagner enthusiasts are somewhat reserved in committing themselves to sympathy with the Volsung twins. One critic, reviewing the first performances of the *Valkyrie* in English at Drury Lane, had words to the effect that the sympathies of the British public would always be with Hunding. But sympathy never could be with Hunding, if once these individuals could throw off the lurking suspicion that sympathy entails approval of conjugal relations between brother and sister. There is no parallel. All the poetical idea insists on is that the propagation of the divine nature of man has to be kept from perishing. That this is propagated from the highest race is poetically and dramatically justifiable. Wagner's aspect of life looked upon the prolificness of nature as one of its glories. "Go forth and multiply." If nature sinned in producing, then that sin could only be empirically apprehended, from evil effects as we by experience now apprehend it, not from any inherent fault in nature which we can possibly

know *a priori*.* The effect of marriage instigated by lust and other egoistic traits produced in the offspring like traits of character. All this had its roots in want of freedom; the way to rise to a higher condition was to leave such unions to be regulated by love alone. Nature would then produce its kind. No slur is cast on marriage by Wagner; it is purified, and the special relationship which we now accept as a sin in our social condition, detrimental to the race and repugnant to our thoughts, is neither upheld nor denounced. It does not enter into the question. But this much may be said, that exactly the same reason which we now give for the disuse of this practice forms the reason for its use in the *Ring of the Nibelung*. It was to help the race then: it is to help the race now. No offence is taken at the children of Adam and Eve marrying. No one believes that ever the race of men was actually subjected to such conditions. It is all a poetical myth, and carries its moral and its lessons with offence only to those who see their conventional ideas of morality attacked.

* Schopenhauer's philosophy certainly attributes this knowledge to *a priori* conditions.

THE WANDERER.

Wotan, who with his spear enforced the obligations incurred by contract, recedes as the race, independent of imposed law, grows to manhood. The world is still under the thraldom of the law, but Wotan's interest had waned since he found it compelled the destruction of that which he loves. He appears as a wanderer, the exercise of whose might has been relinquished in order to allow of the advent of a new power to whom egoism becomes a stranger. His presence before Mime and Alberich, conscious of his own incapacity and ready voluntarily to abdicate in favour of the one new commandment, is like a visit from the covenant-making God of the Jews, to the forces of envy and hatred aspiring to rule the world. Mime's craft and diplomacy are humourously put to a test. If he possesses more knowledge of his art than lay in the binding obligation of the rule Wotan upheld, then the Wanderer's head becomes forfeit to Mime's craft. Mime can answer everything but the question about the weapon which is to slay Fafner, just as our Church, under the patronage of the Jewish God, can never explain

how the growth of intellect is really detrimental to truth, and yet why it never allows it to thrive except in its service. The Wanderer goes his way, informing Mime that his head is forfeit to the fearless intellect. He next informs Alberich, who awaits the destroyer of Fafner, that Siegfried must kill the dragon unassisted by him. Alberich, who knows no compromise, cannot understand the indifference of the Wanderer regarding the possession of the Ring, just as society cannot understand a man who does not lay the fruits of his genius at its feet, to receive blandishments and patronage. When the Wanderer calls up the reluctant spirit of wisdom, Erda, it is not any longer to get wisdom from her, but to proclaim the wisdom of his act.

Before Siegfried, his satisfaction is tempered by the want of reverence shown for his old age. We feel here what is owed to the individual capacity for working good and the respect due to it even when attached to conventional forms. Wotan's sense of dignity is aroused by Siegfried's disregard, and he bars his progress with the spear, on which is cut the runes of the bargain. When it is shattered, he departs, awaiting the end,

but also the beginning, which a restoration of the Ring to the Rhine will bring—the end of a rule founded on a morality knowing no higher law than contracts, and the beginning of one which knows it is more blessed to give than to receive.

GUNTHER AND GUTRUNE.

The *Dusk of the Gods* shows us a race of men descended from a godly stock, but under the influence of Hagen, and therewith subject to acts of treachery. They exist in a world whose aims are only gained by wilful deceit. Of the nature of deceit, however, they are conscious, which is not the case with Mime, Alberich, and Hagen. Deceitfulness brings on itself its own destruction when it reproaches the sheer envy and malice which it accepted as a helpmate, and thus Gunther falls before Hagen. Siegfried has to be attacked from behind.

SIEGFRIED.

Brünnhilde. "Oh Siegfried, Siegfried,
Conquering light:
I loved thee ever,
For I alone
Divined Wotan's thought."—*Siegfried.*

Keeping in mind that an ultimate solution of what love is, is not forthcoming in the *Nibelung*, because it is bound up with optimism, we may still designate Siegfried the one new commandment which turned the ten out of doors as unnecessary. Siegfried is free from all conventionalism. He feels the need of a better mate than Mime. All natural living objects enjoy themselves in pairs. Was he alone an exception? Could he have sprung from such an object as Mime? He had seen the reflection of his own face in a stream. He saw that like produced like. He felt an inward aversion to Mime. In nature was found everything needful. There, everything responded to Siegfried's wishes without questioning. But from Mime he could get no knowledge without blows. When he wanted to know how he came into the world there was the same pitiable juggling, till Mime was compelled to give an answer. Then he was told how his mother died in giving birth to him. Do all mothers of men die in giving birth to sons? he asks later. He compels Mime to produce some sign to prove his assertions, and when the pieces of the sword are brought out

he orders Mime to weld them. Mime, however, can do nothing but utilise Siegfried's power for his own purposes. He cannot provide the power. Siegfried, having welded the sword himself, is led to the dragon to slay it—for what purpose? to provide Mime with the Ring it guards. Siegfried kills the dragon, but Mime is killed as well, and his body goes with that of the dragon to lie with the hoard, from which the emblem of egoistic striving was taken, in innocence of its power, by Siegfried. Now, instructed by the bird, he wends his way to find his mate and therewith to unite his innocence to the devotion which, without thought of self, had rescued love and its fruits from death.

BRÜNNHILDE.

Wotan: "Let the coward shun
Brünnhilde's rock,
For but one shall win the bride:
Who is freer than I the god?"
Valkyrie, Act III.

Brünnhilde, the child of man's highest intelligence and of the world's deepest wisdom, is deputed by Wotan, under the thraldom of the

conditions by which he rules the world, to so direct the battle that Siegmund is killed by Hunding. This forms the dramatic action of the second act of the *Valkyrie.* Brünnhilde, who knows Wotan's heart and cannot understand the motive power which compels him to issue orders not in accord with the feelings of his heart, disobeys him out of sympathy with what he loves. The bold upheaval of the laws which Wotan had to direct, brings about the usual judicial revenge. It is to Brünnhilde, who underwent the crushing wrath of the powers she disobeyed, that we owe the birth of the bearer of ideal love. All truly unselfish actions involve disgrace in the eyes of the established law. Brünnhilde is now cast out from the company of the gods and condemned to sleep till she is awakened by one who is freer than the power which banished her and condemned her. Miss Western, in her interesting book *The Legends of the Wagner Drama,* points out that this sleep in northern mythology means death; and in considering this from the point of view of the music, we shall find that the same idea exists in Wagner's drama. Brünnhilde has severed herself by her action from associateship with the

gods. In this action, however, she committed herself to the service of love, and, having passed through the purifying fire of death, when awakened by the manly, nature-bred child of love, is united to the only spirit which is of her kith and kin.

When the road had been gained and the fire passed, when the faithful heart of Brünnhilde had been awakened from its sleep by the herald of joyful manhood, when the spirit which had consciously defied convention united with the spirit which never knew what convention was, then the conditions were obtained which allowed of the restoration of the Ring to the innocence of nature, —only, however, after the curse attached to it had reeked its vengeance on its last innocent holder. Brünnhilde's wisdom was fully reawakened by sorrow. What she refused to do at the supplication of Waltraute, she voluntarily did when her own hero and beloved fell before the withering power of the Ring, though held innocent of its guilt.

Man was thus purified from that deadly sin of turning to selfish, interested purposes that which was provided by nature to enrich and delight every one.

CHAPTER III.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

CERTAIN biographies and comments thereon have an unpleasant manner of unveiling the character of the writers more than they unveil that of the subject of biography. Prejudice and antipathy invest such incidents as are readily susceptible to the treatment necessary to the author's desired end, with a bias which defeats the honest purpose of biography, but tells us something of the author which he, for his own sake, might have spared himself. In such displays very conclusive testimony is offered as evidence of the confused ideas we entertain concerning right and wrong. When certain "indiscretions" creep into the "mealy-mouthed" type of biography, written to magnify the hireling, consternation and indignation arise from the fold of conventional respectability; but outside that fold the opposite takes place, since those "indiscretions" not only are welcomed

because they disclose the fact that beneath the trappings of artificiality the real, interesting man is not entirely smothered, but also because they provide evidence which helps to demolish the assumption that truth can be fostered where convention rules.

If a man's life, however, consists of these "indiscretions," the biographer, writing in the interest of makeshift religion and morality is not further troubled than to paint them black against the canvas of conventionality.

It is the old familiar story. Let a man be independent, fighting his way through prejudice, and despising the good name and comfort which servility to constituted ideas offer him, he becomes a target for those pharisees, whose wrong-headedness does not stop at the thanking of their god that they are not as other men, but prompts them to misrepresent those "who are wearing out their lives in the search for truth," once more to quote Huxley. In "A Happy Evening," one of his early Parisian contributions to periodical literature, Wagner said of Mozart's and Beethoven's symphonies, "They are not for profit, these symphonies. They exist for their own

sake, and not in order to stimulate the blood of a philistine. Whoever can, let him, for his own welfare and happiness, become imbued with a comprehension of these inspired works, but they are under no obligation to impose themselves upon the understanding of cold hearts." In other words, that which possesses merit is capable of endearing itself to kindred natures; let once, however, artificial means be adopted, then a similar artificial interest, not consistent with artistic inspiration, will be found in the audience ready to applaud it. The artificiality of the surroundings will produce an art work within that artificiality, and the subjection of the producing artist to that which can teach his art nothing, but can only provide him with the material which must be woven into a texture before it presents a lesson, is derogatory to the calling of art itself. Wagner regarded every production of nature and of art which was made to fulfil ends not consistent with its direct aim, as degraded. Such productions as nature offered for the sustenance of life were not the outcome of self-interested motives. All was freely offered, disinterestedly. Artistic ideas were similarly an

inspiration of nature. The sin lay in evading the direct end of products which nature brought forth, in order to turn the means to account for personal profit. Everything must suffer under such perverse misapplications of what is necessary to sustain and invigorate man, and the suffering inflicted itself not only on those who were deprived of sufficiency from the over-abundant resources of nature, but equally on those who, leading a life of luxury, waxed fat on a surfeit of these resources.

To daily propound platitudes of this sort, from a position of doubtful legitimacy, infatuated with the vanity instilled by ceremonialism, was not the method of Richard Wagner. He did not pose as a divinely inspired oracle, above the application to self of the method which is so glibly preached and so easily avoided under the right, assumed divine on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle.

> "How many things by season seasoned are
> To their right praise and true perfection!"

says Portia to Nerissa. No more is asked as a preliminary to understanding wherein lay Wagner's opposition to things as he viewed them.

To Wagner, the mere laying bare of the error was a small affair, requiring a modest disavowal of any merit of discovery in stating it. In the introduction to *Opera and Drama* he points out how in the opera means had been turned into an end, and the end into a means. This, however, forms the basis of his other indictments, and there is no difficulty in tracing the revolutionary idea, involved in rectifying this error, throughout Wagner's life, till in 1881, in *What boots this Knowledge?* writing about the significance of Schopenhauer's philosophy, which he says, "as soon as we recognise with the complete understanding of this philosophy, such a radical change in our customary mode of judgment must result as we in like manner infer resulted from the conversion of heathens to Christianity." This radical change is exactly the point wherein Wagner's life becomes more and more unintelligible, as the perversity in declining to entertain it becomes rooted. The confusion defies every attempt at clear exposition when we leave the domain of social discord and enter on that of religious discord, to find that this change demanded by Wagner is the very Christian doctrine

preached by that most perverse opponent of it in practice. Split up into factions, differing on spurious rites utterly destructive of the spirit of Christianity and of its clear exposition, one faction flatters itself that Christianity is attained by discarding some items of artificiality possessed by others. Wagner said that the root of this matter lay in the fact that every "visible" thing into whose hands the teaching of Christianity is entrusted, is the very obstacle in the way of effecting that which the Christian religion inculcates. It is not difficult, therefore, to conclude that Wagner, in his middle period—namely, from the first conception of the *Ring*, in 1848, till his views on the outcome of the exercise of human energy were changed by Schopenhauer's philosophy—although not a professing Christian, had more of the essence of that religion in him than members of any Church, through their Church, can offer.

Restricting the application of the turning of means into ends and ends into means to social and artistic matters, Wagner's own words (the apostrophising method being dropped) in the introduction to *Opera and Drama* will best explain

what he thought of the mere exposition of error. "It almost seems to me as if a mighty courage, an uncommonly bold resolve, was needed to acknowledge and proclaim that error. As if it was felt that the ground would slip away from present musical producings if once that necessary avowal and unparalleled self-sacrifice were effected. But yet it calls for no excess of strength or trouble, and, least of all, of pluck and daring; when it is nothing but a question of simply, and without any outlay of wonder and amazement, acknowledging a patent fact long felt but now grown past denial. I almost blush to speak with *lifted* voice the brief formula that bares the error, for I well might be ashamed to give the air of a weighty novelty to something so clear, so simple, and in itself so certain that I should fancy all the world must long ago have got the thing by heart. If, therefore, I pronounce the formula with stronger accent, if I declare aloud that the error in the art *genre* of opera consists herein 'that a Means of expression (Music) has been made the end, while the End of expression (the Drama) has been made the means,'—I do it nowise in the idle dream of having discovered

something new, but with the object of posting the error so plain that every one may see it and of thus taking the field against that miserable half-heartedness which has spread its pall above our Art and criticism." *

And our object—we who recognise in Wagner qualities so defined as we recognise them in no one else—is to apply the import of this last sentence universally, *so plainly that every one may see it, and thus to take the field against that miserable half-heartedness which has spread its pall over life.*

Already, then, we arrive at the problem common to the *Ring of the Nibelung*, in which the conflict arises from the utilising for individual profit of a means which nature provides for disinterested enjoyment.

Biography has to concern itself with three aspects of a man's career—private life, attitude to public affairs, and the legacy of intellectual fruitfulness. No one of these, considered by itself, can present a complete picture of the subject; but the one by itself most effective is

* *Operā and Drama.* English translation of Wagner's Prose Works, Vol. II., p. 17.

the last.* Wagner's artistic works, regarded as a whole, certainly mirror his character. The utterances on and attitude to public affairs, usually so fugitive in their application, leave ample scope for the biographer, who fain would keep works and character apart (probably with an eye at a convenient season to excuse or disown his own work), so to manipulate them that they appear detrimental to good name from the conventional point of view. Private life, however, to the Beckmessers of biography is the chief happy hunting ground, and both in public and private life no more accommodating subject in this respect than Richard Wagner is to be found. Was he not discontented? and is not discontent an evil? —except, of course, when it manifests itself in discontent against Wagner himself; in this case no amount of the dross of falsehood being able to depreciate it. Was not Wagner a fugitive from justice? a "gentleman of the pavement,"

* This may appear destructive to the theory that true artistic production remains objective. It must not be forgotten that objective and subjective are not two opposing parallel lines, like two rows of houses forming a street, but one and the same viewed from different standpoints. In musical inspiration objectivity and subjectivity are absolutely the same thing.

accused of setting fire to royal palaces, of ingratitude to his king? What does it matter if he was guilty of neither? He was accused by officials, and had these officials got hold of him he would have spent years in a dungeon. Did he not try to solve the problem of how to live, *à la* Skimpole, by living on his friends? What matter if he offered all his priceless artistic powers for an income of £300 or £400 a year to enable him to produce in peace and comfort, and was always ready to assist local art? Did he not ask Liszt to get him an Erard piano, telling him to make to Madame Erard a hundred thousand pretences of its necessity—for instance, that it was a matter of honour for her to see that he had an Erard in his house? What matter if this style corresponded with multitudes of similar instances of jocularity with intimate friends amidst a life of manly, unfearing devotion to his convictions?

Was he not a Revolutionist? What matter if thousands of other revolutionists have been prompted and favourably judged by motives of the purest humanity, who previously had never proved their greatness and sincerity by com-

posing a *Tannhäuser*? This revolution in Saxony requires some enquiry into its causes before the good name of those who took part against the authorities is called in question. Although nominally caused by the refusal of the King to grant the constitution, which had been submitted to the various principalities by the Frankfort diet, there lay in reality a much deeper grievance at its root. During these revolutionary days, Wagner associated with Bakunin, Roeckel, and Heubner, who were condemned to death, but subsequently had their sentences commuted to long terms of imprisonment. He distributed printed slips among the soldiers, asking them if they would resist the entrance of foreign (Prussian) troops which had been promised to the Saxon authorities to quell with blood any insurrection. He mounted the church tower and threw down written observations for the guidance of the provisional government; a letter was found on Roeckel, who had temporarily gone to Prague, from Wagner, telling him to return, since it was feared that a revolution might break out too soon. Furthermore, he tried to encourage troops to support the rebellion; he publicly

embraced, in Freiburg, Heubner, one of the members of the provisional government, who had just delivered a speech. These are the worst atrocities that research can attribute to Wagner. Doubtless any one of them, for the purposes of the law, might implicate Wagner, and to many people they require excuses and gloss to clear his good name. To us, on the contrary, they are evidence of the goodness of his heart, and are solely possible when understood as arising from motives similar to those which gave rise to his public utterances and his artistic works.

It is, in fact, useless for the purpose of deciding what is its moral value, to dwell on individual participation in a revolution, and therefrom to arrive at a summary conclusion which settles the reputation of the individual concerned. All is summed up in the truth that Wagner sympathised and to some extent acted with the revolutionists; he believed that no permanent reform in art was possible without a new system of government. That such a new system was not possible at a blow, that such ideas in fact are fallacious, in no wise invests with one particle more merit the practices

of existing governments, neither does it relieve them of the charges of self-seeking and neglect of the people's welfare, nor does it lessen the injustice of procedure. How is it possible out of the conflicting opinions to judge the whole case to the detriment of those who took part against the authorities? Count Waldersee himself, who commanded the Prussian troops in Saxony, said that the King of Saxony knew well enough there would be a civil war if the Frankfort *Reichsverfassung* was not adopted. But what power had the King in the matter? He was influenced by officials who again were divided in their opinion. Oberländer in whom the people had the most confidence was one of a ministry which promised and then withheld the *Reichsverfassung*. In consequence of his desire to effect reforms he stood in the bad graces of the more pronounced court party, of which Beust became the ruling spirit. This delay in giving the people a form of government expected by them, and promised to them, was merely the goading, intended to force an exasperated section into revolt, and thus provide reason for drawing on the offer from Prussia of troops, which was

a lasting insult to the Saxon people. Under all the cross purposes, how much is heard of any action or opinion of the King, which aroused the opprobrium of the people? The democratic papers of the time recognise the King's personal virtues. "The Princes themselves may remain at the head of affairs as long as they take in good part the newly won experience" (*Volksblätter*, No. 1, 1849). The revolutionary party scarcely seemed to be aware that the eventual position of the King entered into the question, and the court party were, as all court parties are, servile flatterers only in so far as it utilised the King for its own end. As to the would-be promoters of a general European revolution in which the Saxon uprising was only an episode, the adoption of the *Reichsverfassung* was of little account. Bakunin was their leader. Violence and outrage were their means. The intention on Bakunin's part was to overthrow all existing governments, but no idea of what was practically to supplant them was entertained.

Wagner also did not trouble himself about a *Reichsverfassung*, but he did not mean to attain his end by outrage and crime. He was con-

cerned with ideas which would not allow of a court party existing at the expense of the people. He saw and felt what is much easier to understand and does not leave room for useless judgments before the trouble is taken to examine the causes of discontent—namely, that a misappropriation of nature's products, or in other words, that selfish interests brought about misery. He was concerned in trying to make man's actions correspond to nature's actions. View in this as much ideality as one will, there is no one, great or small, who preaches to others, or by implication who attributes blame to others, that does not have this idea underlying all his positive ideas of bettering the conditions of mankind. If it is now considered how, in Wagner's case, this theorising or abstract exposition of principles forms but an insignificant part in his life's work, while often in a much less clear and consistent way it makes up the sum-total of the work of others, some glimpse may be caught of his greatness. And if it is further considered that this theory is in conformity with the ideas of his great art works and his scrupulous disinterestedness in the production of

them and such works of other composers as he considered worthy, then good reason is given to grant him a hearing. It is a wonderful thing, with all we hear about truth, that so little store is set by the recognition of it in the few instances in which we meet with it.

Wagner's best labours sometimes served to effect a connection in public opinion between his acts and the burning down of public buildings. It is well known that, in face of the usual opposition, he produced in Dresden the ninth symphony; for the first time making it intelligible. His enthusiasm for this glorification of "joy" led people to connect it with the stirring up of the people to revolt. Doubtless this is quite right. The only question is, Was it morally wrong of Beethoven to write and of Wagner to produce it? Joy, according to Schiller, is a divine spark; and according to revolutionary ideas, seen through the eyes of officials, the sparks which set fire to the old Opera House in Dresden were also divine. In 1846 an anonymous attack was made on Wagner in the *Dresdener Anzeiger* of Tuesday, April 7th. It said: "Our authorities are to be envied for the confidence in which

they repose on Palm Sunday, when the thousands trust themselves to listen to music, whose sounding board seems to await fire and collapse." This theatre, in which the ninth symphony was performed, was actually burned down, and as Wagner, during the revolutionary days, was on his way to his home some one called out to him, "Joy, Herr Capellmeister! the divine spark has caught fire." *

Again, when Semper and Wagner were discussing the question of how *Lohengrin* was to be properly put on the stage, Wagner complained that the depth was not sufficient, whereon Semper said, "Yes, indeed, I would like to burn the old barn down." This conversation was carried on in front of Meyer's music shop, near to which Reissiger, with other musicians, was standing, and soon the dreadful plot was whispered in all corners. When the building actually was burned down, this overheard conversation was not forgotten.† Whether Beust founded his belief on stories of this kind or not it is hard to say. Certainly he had no further evidence to connect Richard Wagner with such actions; but the acts

* Dinger, p. 178. † *Ib.*, p. 193.

tell of another Wagner, an apprentice, who seems to have had some hand in trying to set fire to the Palace. This, of course, was sufficient for Beust, who years after gave prominence to an interview he had with Wagner on the latter's return to Dresden. Wagner had gone to pay a complimentary visit to the official, since it was through him that finally permission was granted to return. Beust seems to tell his story with a certain jocularity and pleasure in putting Wagner on the rack. His first words were, "I am glad if I have been able to give you pleasure, Herr Wagner. You will, however, on that account not do anything unpleasant towards me, therefore I beg no demonstrations." "I do not understand you," was the answer. "H'm, you remember, however, what occurred in 1849?" "Ah, that was an unfortunate misunderstanding." "A misunderstanding!" said Beust. "Are you supposed not to know that among the acts of accusation there is a paper written by you, in which you boast of having set fire to the Prince's Palace, fortunately without result?" Instead of continuing his account of the conversation, or informing us what Wagner said under these circumstances, Beust, evidently

unconscious of his vulgarity, continues, "Whether he sang to this, 'Frisch, Feuer, Flamme, fröhlich und furchtbar,' I don't know." There can be no doubt it did not require much refinement on Wagner's part to play the more dignified *rôle* in a conversation of this sort. Quite independent testimony comes bit by bit to hand concerning Wagner's real character. Arditi draws special attention to his refined appearance; and Hallé, who knew him in the early Parisian days, says, "We liked him as a most frank, amiable, and lively companion, modest and full of enthusiasm for all that is beautiful in art." *

* Otherwise Hallé's remarks hardly bear out what he asserts—namely, that Wagner latterly had become bombastic in his utterances. He tells us already in Paris when Wagner did speak of his aspirations it was "in a strain which made us wonder if he was all there." Hallé gives no example, but we know some from the writings of that time; they prove an exalted enthusiasm. When Hallé met Wagner at Heidelberg twenty years later, he got hold of one of these bombastic utterances, which was promptly written down by a Dr. Becker, and preserved as an incomprehensible curiosity. Wagner thought the English an extraordinary nation, but doubted if their nature was emotional enough to permit of them becoming really enthusiastic about art. How Wagner expressed this does not much matter. It is neither difficult to understand from the words reported, nor is its meaning open to dispute. The calculating, callous character of the Englishman is not in sympathy with artistic work. It is much to be doubted if Hallé, who admits that he openly sobbed when hearing the great scene from the

It has been for so long the custom to look on Wagner's character with a certain amount of commiseration, that to those who hesitate to take in good faith everything they hear, great surprise must be occasioned by considering the possibility of a contemptible nature producing such beautiful music as Wagner has produced. In *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* the devotional character is so prominent yet so devoid of the set ecclesiastical flavour, and so bound up with the dramatic import,

Freischütz and also in conducting operas, was not of an emotional nature himself. Again, from Bayreuth in 1884 Hallé wrote, "*Parsifal* yesterday made a very deep impression upon me, much more so than before; I shall see it again to-morrow with very great interest. After all, one has no idea in England of such a performance, and one ought to come here every year to learn what can be done—every detail is so perfect." In 1876 Wagner had said to Hallé, "I shall, my dear Hallé, make Bayreuth the centre of civilisation." Answered Hallé, with politely subdued irony, instead of watching Wagner's manner when he said the above, "A noble aim, dear master." Wagner was accustomed to make hearty laughter follow remarks of this kind. He took his work in far too humorously a serious way to proclaim his most cherished hopes in the tone of a Methodist street preacher. Hallé was an estimable man, one out of those many foreigners to whom England chiefly owes the extent of what is worthy in her musical education, but being a Catholic in religion and a Conservative in politics, he, like many others, had got rid cheaply of the real battles of life which Wagner faced. How could he appreciate thoroughly a man who was religious in his Catholicity and politic in his Conservatism? The Catholic and the Conservative have their bombast done by contract. It is not exactly subdued in those who undertake it.

that no one can fail to be impressed with the manner in which its sincerity harmonises with the most elevated of human feelings. Wagner could never have written tripping music to heartless, frivolous sensuality. A Leporello, who with Mozart discourses gleefully to a sorrowing Elvira of his master's amours, would have been turned into a poltroon like Beckmesser, and Elvira into an object of profound sympathy like Elsa. Wagner could equally with Mozart produce buoyancy of spirits, but that buoyancy had to be imbued with manliness. Human nature in its baser sensual instincts is portrayed deadly in earnest, as in *Tannhäuser* and *Parsifal.* The nobler, more spiritual atmosphere, is at once invested with a halo of reverential music, the baser is no less seriously delineated, but its significance is such a dramatic contrast that never for a moment could humour effect the necessary contrast. The finest humour in a Wagnerian work is entrusted to the best and noblest of characters, Hans Sachs. Wotan also in *Siegfried* presents an instance of grim humour, and Gournemanz is susceptible to it when he considers Klingsor's method of attaining righteousness. Alberich and Mime, Ortrud,

Klingsor, Beckmesser, are in deadly earnest; their sensuality and greed are never masked under a vein of humour. It is possible that this opposition of character, investing the good with humour and generosity, the bad with poltroonery and spite, is the stumbling-block to those whose zeal lies in worshipping fashion, and whose evil lies in ridiculing unpretentiousness, provincialism, or whatever word is employed to designate indifference for the seats of honour in society. Humanly considered, Leporello's ways are those of a buffoon and poltroon, very much in accordance with the stuff which passes for humour among our clever people. Among this self-satisfied set there are certain critics most prominent in adversely criticising works of Wagner and Ibsen who expect themselves to be taken seriously in their affectation of offence at certain scenes. Those individuals simply produce more material for students of nature, who do not understand why in dramatic art hypocrisy should be excluded from receiving exposition. It may be safely asserted that the offence lies in seeing themselves and their habits exposed on the stage along with the hollowness of the code under which hypocrisy is

at a premium. Wagner, having arrived at a comprehension of what vice is, treats all social forms of it as evil, and the chief of them is hypocrisy. He, however, at this period of his life, considered that the evil did not lie in the nature of man, but in the retainment of conditions which were capable of being changed. Three works, of biographical interest, display his attitude to existing conditions. We will reproduce two of these works, and consider another. The first is an article entitled, "The Revolution," and was written for Roeckel's *Volksblätter*. It appeared on Sunday, April 8th, 1849, just within four weeks of the declaration of the provisional government. The article was unsigned, but is acknowledged as genuine by Glasenapp, and printed in the appendix to the second volume of his enlarged *Life of Wagner*. The merit of first publishing it belongs to Dr. Hugo Dinger, who included it in his book, *Wagner's Geistige Entwickelung*, and therein pays Nicolaus Oesterlein a well-deserved compliment for rescuing it from oblivion and adding it to the Wagner museum. This article entirely speaks for itself, and is so completely the work of an enthusiast and a poet that no necessity arises for

explanation. At the same time attention may be drawn to the manner in which Wagner distinguishes between man's actual power of producing and the material itself when produced. To command the former is to possess an illegitimate power over others, and to obtain possession of the latter gives an equally illegitimate power over material. The first is one's own property, the other is for those who need it.

THE REVOLUTION.

"If we cast our eyes over lands and nations, we apprehend everywhere throughout Europe the agitation of a powerful commotion, whose first vibrations have already made themselves felt to us, but whose most violent shock threatens soon to overwhelm us. Europe appears like a huge volcano, from whose depths resound a steadily increasing disquieting murmur; from whose crater dark storm-laden pillars of smoke mount up to the sky, spreading all around and encircling the earth with the sombreness of night, while already single streams of lava, breaking through the hard crust, like fiery forerunners pour them-

selves into the valley, destroying whatsoever they touch.

"A superhuman power seems to possess our part of the globe; seems on the point of lifting it out of the old rut to launch it on its new course.

"Truly we know it, this old world; it is being shattered, and a new world will arise from its ruins, for the sublime goddess REVOLUTION is arriving on the wings of the brewing storm, lightning playing around her august head, the sword grasped in the right hand, the torch in the left, her eye so threatening, so avenging, so distant, and yet to those who dare look into it with a steady gaze, so radiant, with abundant grace and fervour of the purest love. Therefore she comes attended by storms, this ever-rejuvenating mother of mankind, spreading destruction and blessing on the earth; before her rages the storm, furiously laying waste all the structures of human ingenuity, darkening the air with blinding clouds of dust, and where is laid the imprint of her mighty foot crushing into atoms the vain-glorying fabric of thousands of years, and sweeping aside with the hem of her garment its last traces! But behind her an undreamt paradise of prosperity unfolds

itself, made glorious to our eyes by endearing sunbeams; where no destructive tread of her foot lingers, but where the sweet-scented flowers spring from the ground and the entrancing songs of joy from delivered mankind pervade the atmosphere still vibrating with the din of battle.

"Now look around you. There you see one a powerful prince; how anxiously, with beating heart, with gasping breath, he yet affects hypocritically a calm, stately manner, to himself and others denying what all know to be inevitable. There you see another, his joyless countenance furrowed with all kinds of vice, how assiduously he plumes himself and brings into play all his petty tricks of art which have secured him so many titles, so many orders; how he is seeking with his smiling, mysterious, diplomatic air to appease some society jade clutching anxiously her smelling bottle, or some chattering dandy by a semi-official communication to the effect that persons of high position have vouchsafed their attention to this strange apparition; that couriers have been despatched in various directions with cabinet instructions; that even the orders of that sapient state-juggler Metternich are on the way from London; that

the respective authorities all around have received instructions, and now there is being got ready for the high-born of society at the next court ball the interesting surprise that this terror-instilling vagrant the Revolution is to be taken under closer surveillance—as a matter of course loaded with chains in an iron cage. There you see a third: how he speculatingly observes the approach of the intruder, runs to the Bourse, takes the measure of and calculates the rise and fall in stocks, jobs and haggles and always holds out for another per cent., till with a puff all his gains are scattered to the winds. There you see bending behind the dusty bureau one of the shrivelled rusty old wheels of our present state machine; how his stump-worn quill keeps scratching away over the parchment, seeking everlastingly to add to the worthless heap of red-tape rule. The throbbing hearts of human beings are pressed like dried plants between these stacks of documents and compacts, withering away to dust in such modern torture chambers. Urgent activity rules there because the web spread over the land is in rents in many places, and the astonished spiders twist and weave in order to patch up the breaches.

No beam of light breaks through, nothing reigns but perpetual night and darkness, and in night and darkness all will be dissipated. From the other side, however, there sounds piercing warlike music, swords and bayonets flash, heavy cannons rumble to the rescue, and the massive battalions approach in close order. The brave troops of heroes are on the field to maintain the struggle against the Revolution. The commander orders marches and countermarches, makes the sharpshooters cover this advance, the cavalry command yonder position and disposes with calm deliberation of the lengthy columns and the shattering artillery; while all the time the Revolution, head in air comes marching along, yet unobserved; as the enemy are on the outlook she is standing among them; they see her not, and await the enemy, while she has them in the grasp of her powerful whirlwind, dissolving the lines and scattering to the winds the craftily impressed troops. And the commander, there he sits! peering into the map and calculating from which side the enemy will most likely make its approach, how strong it is, and when it will arrive.

"Look over there! Do you see an anxious,

careworn countenance? It is that of an honourable, diligent civilian. He has striven and laboured his life through, and he has honestly employed his talents according to his capacity for the welfare of all; no tears, no injustices reproach the mite of activity which he has contributed to support himself in his old age and to uphold his family in a joyless existence. He is well aware of the approach of the storm, well does he recognise that no power can resist it; still sick at heart he recalls his careworn existence, whose fruits are now condemned to destruction. We are not fitted to judge him adversely if he cling with anxiety to his treasure, if he strain all his nerves vainly to oppose with blind zeal the dawn of the revolution. Thou misguided being! lift up thine eyes, see yonder where thousands and thousands assemble on the hill-tops awaiting the new sun, in joyful expectation. Regard them, they are thy brothers and thy sisters; they are the masses of those poor and miserable beings whose share of life hitherto has been *nought* but *sorrow*; strangers to joy on this earth. They look for salvation from the world of care to the revolution which causes the anxiety: they look to the revolution for the

creation of a new and a prosperous world for *all.* See them crowd out from the factories: they have made and produced the most glorious goods; they and their children are naked, shivering with hunger and cold, because the fruits of their exertions belong to the rich and powerful, who claim the world and its population as *theirs.* Behold! they gather from the villages and homesteads: it is they who have cultivated the earth and transformed it into a pleasure garden, and their labours were rewarded with the abundance of harvest sufficient for every human being; but see, they are poor and unclad and hungry, because the blessings of the earth are not for them, nor for those who suffer from want, but they belong to the rich and powerful, who claim the world and its population as theirs. All of those hundreds of thousands and millions encamp on the heights, and look out into the distance where the gathering clouds proclaim the advent of the revolution, and they all who have nothing left to lament, who are even robbed of their sons to be trained as valorous jailers of their fathers, who are robbed of their daughters to wander shame-covered through the streets the prey of

the base lusts of the rich and powerful; every one of them who with pale sorrow-stricken countenances, who with bodies consumed with hunger and frost, they all who never knew what joy was, there they lie encamped on the heights, and with tremulous expectation they look with streaming eyes towards the approaching vision, and in breathless rapture listen to the murmur of the gathering storm which wafts to them the first greetings of the revolution—I am the secret of perpetual youth, the everlasting creator of life; where I am not, death rages. I am the comfort, the hope, the dream of the oppressed. I destroy what exists; but from the rock whereon I light new life begins to flow. I come to you to break all chains which bear you down, to free you from the embrace of death and instil a new life into your veins. All that exists must perish; that is the eternal condition of life, and I the all-destroying fulfil that law and create a fresh, new existence. I will renovate to the very foundations the order of things in which you live, for such is the offspring of sin, whose blossom is misery and whose fruit is crime. The grain is ripe, and I am the reaper. I will dissipate every delusion

which has mastery over the human race. I will destroy the authority of the one over the many; of the lifeless over the living; of the material over the spiritual. I will break in pieces the authority of the great; of the law of property. Let the will of *each* be master of mankind, one's *own* desires fashion laws, one's *own* strength be one's *own* property, *for the FREEMAN* is the sacred man, and there is nothing sublimer than he.* Let the delusion be trampled under foot which gives to one individual power over millions; which reduces millions to the subjection of one; which would teach that one possesses the power to make happy others. The peer dare not rule over his peer, he has no power over his equal; and thus, *since all are equal, I will destroy the mastery of the one over the other.*

"Let the delusion be destroyed which provides for the mastery of death over life, of the past

* People may be inclined to ridicule this boundless optimism, who, however, if they compare what Wagner says about free men with what certain elevated orthodox authorities say will be found, in comparison, to shine in lucidity. For instance, take that well-known saying of Archbishop (Wagner was not an Archbishop) Magee, "He would rather see England drunk and free, than slaves and sober." People who are subject to drink are certainly very free!

over the future. The law of the dead, that is their *own* law; it shares their lot and dies with them—it must not prevail over life. *Life is in itself its law.* And since law is for the living and not for the dead, and since you are the living there exists no one who dare master you; *thus you alone are the law, your own free will the single sublime law, and therefore I will destroy the mastery of the dead over the living.* Destroyed be the delusion which makes mankind the slave of his own work, of his own property. The noblest gift of mankind is his productive power; therein lies the source of all prosperity, and not in what is produced; in production itself is the *employment of your power*, therein lies your true and highest enjoyment. Man's work is without life, the living must not be beholden to the lifeless, must not be made subject to it. Therefore destroyed be the delusion which hampers enjoyment and limits free will, which elevates property over man and degrades him to become the slave to his own work. Look around you, misguided ones, on these abundant meadows through which you wander slaves, strangers. You shall walk them free, free from the yoke of the living, free

from the chains of the dead. What nature has made, mankind cultivates and transforms into fruitful gardens; it belongs to *mankind*, to the *needy*, and no one dare come and say: 'To me belongs this for ever, and all of you are only guests, whom I suffer so long as it pleases me, from whom I get rent and whom I drive away when it pleases me. What nature has given and man has produced, and what the living stand in need of, is *mine*.' Destroyed be this lie. *To him who is in need belongs alone what satisfies*, and of such superabundance is offered you by nature, by your own resources. Behold the houses within the towns and everything that satisfies and pleases mankind. All of you must wander past as if strangers; the mind and the arm of men have created it, and therefore it belongs to *man*, the *living*, and no *single person* dare come and say: '*to me* belongs every thing that man has produced in his diligence. *I* alone have a right to it, and others may only enjoy as it pleases me when they pay me rent.' Destroyed be this lie along with the other; for what man has produced belongs to man for his boundless enjoyment, as do all other

things on the earth. I will destroy the existing order of things which divides the one humanity into hostile peoples, into strong and weak, into privileged and outlawed, into rich and poor, for that makes unfortunate creatures of one and all. I will destroy the order of things which makes millions the slaves of the few, and those few the slaves of their own power, of their own wealth. I will destroy the order of things which severs enjoyment from labour, which turns labour into a burden and enjoyment into a vice, which makes one man miserable through want and another miserable through super-abundance. I will destroy this order of things which consumes the vigour of manhood in the service of the dead, of inert matter which sustains one part of mankind in idleness or useless activity, which forces thousands to devote their sturdy youth to the indolent pursuits of soldiery, officialism, speculation and usury, and the maintenance of such like despicable conditions, while the other half, by excessive exertion and sacrifice of all enjoyment of life, bears the burden of the whole infamous structure. I will destroy even the very memory and trace of this delirious order of

things which, pieced together out of force, falsehood, trouble, tears, sorrow, suffering, need, deceit, hypocrisy and crime, is shut up in its own reeking atmosphere, and never receives a breath of pure air, to which no ray of pure joy ever penetrates. Let everything be destroyed which oppresses you and makes you suffer, and from the ruins of the old let there arise a *new*, undreamt-of happiness. Let not hatred, envy, jealousy, animosity, remain among you. You must recognise as brothers and sisters all who live; and free, free to will, free to act, free to enjoy, you shall know the worth of existence. Arise, then, ye people of the earth, arise, ye sorrow-stricken oppressed. Ye also who vainly struggle to clothe the inner desolation of your hearts with the transient glory of riches, arise! Come and follow in my track with the joyful crowd, for I know not how to make distinction between those who follow me. There are but two peoples from henceforth on the earth—the one which follows me and the one which resists me. The one I will lead to happiness, but the other I will crush in my progress. For I am the *Revolution*, I am the new creating force. I

am the one divinity which discerns all life, which embraces, revives and rewards.

"Now behold the crowds on the hill-tops: they bend reverentially the knee, they hearken in silent rapture, their withered hearts suck up the murmur of the brewing storm, and new life pulses through their veins as the parched land absorbs the refreshing showers of rain. Nearer and nearer rolls the storm with the Revolution on its wings. Wide open are the newly awakened hearts of those aroused to life, and victoriously the Revolution enters in on their minds, on their bodies, and takes entire possession of them. In divine rapture they arise from the earth; no longer are they poor, no longer are they hungry and bent down with care; proudly they raise their heads, enthusiasm pours from their transfigured countenances, luminous rays stream from their eyes, and with a shout thrilling the very heavens—'I am a living being!'—the millions, the living revolution, divinely exalted man, rush down into the valleys and the plains and announce to the whole world the new evangel of happiness."

The second article is the famous speech read at a meeting of the political "Fatherland" society

and published in the *Dresdener Anzeiger* the following day.* This meeting took place on June 14th, 1848, and was the only occasion on which Wagner publicly expressed himself by word of mouth. The scant knowledge of the import of this speech has left people to judge of its drift, and indeed the entire drift of Wagner's revolutionary tendencies, from the detrimentally implicative fact that it was delivered before a liberal democratic society on the subject of republicanism and monarchy. Mr. H. S. Chamberlain has (in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1892, p. 137) submitted the speech to a searching analysis which places it in its proper light.

For the main point to be observed is that it corresponds with the ideas Wagner elsewhere has expressed; and since the object of the present work on the *Ring* is to disclose the unity underlying the three aspects of Wagner's work—namely, the views of social life, dramatic and theoretic aims, and the music—this speech to a political organisation during the revolutionary ferment of 1848 is of the greatest service in revealing the

* Glasenapp says the speech was first published on June 14th, and delivered at the meeting the day after.

man Wagner and his ideas. We will therefore take Mr. Chamberlain's analysis as a basis for explaining a speech which doubtless, it will appear to many, calls for no explanation. First of all the speech can speak for itself.

How do Republican Efforts Stand in Respect to the Kingship?

"Let us become perfectly clear on this question, and thus thoroughly discuss what the real drift of republican efforts is.

"Do you seriously believe, if we wish to make further progress from our present standpoint, that we must, as an immediate result, adopt in plain terms a Kingless Republic? Do you believe this, or do you merely wish to impose on waverers? Are you wanting in knowledge, or are you evil-disposed?

"I will tell you what our undoubtedly 'republican' efforts aim at. Our efforts for the *well-being of all* are directed towards making the so-called achievements of the past known not as a goal but as a beginning.

"The goal firmly fixed in our minds, we therefore demand an immediate *surrender of the last*

relic of aristocracy; if our gentlemen of title are no longer feudal lords who are able to enslave and oppress us as they choose, then to dispel all ill feeling they must give up the last scrap of distinction, which might easily on a hot day be to them a Nessus shirt consuming them to their very bones if they did not timely throw it far from them. If they * recall their ancestors and hold it impious to renounce the privileges which they have inherited from them, consider that we also have our ancestors to keep in our memory, whose good deeds, no matter how efficiently performed by them, are not preserved in family archives, whose sufferings, serfdom, oppression, and bondage of every kind are nevertheless imprinted in blood in the indestructible annals of the *last thousand years'* history. Let them forget their ancestors, let them throw from

* A slight departure is made here from the text. Wagner is addressing a democratic society, and in impressing his particular views on it, he often apostrophises his audience; otherwise, in the course of his speech, the harmony of the speaker's views and that of the audience is implied in the first and second person plural. Now he comes all at once to apostrophise the aristocrats; and unless some of them were collected in one part of the building, to which the speaker could turn, the subordinate apostrophe becomes confusing, and is therefore dropped.

them every title, every trace of distinction, and we also will promise to be generous and banish the recollection of our ancestors from our memories, so that we all may become children of *one* father, brothers of *one* family. Let them heed the warning; to fulfil it, gladly and freely, out of the fulness of the heart, for it is imperative, and Christ says, 'If a limb offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.'

"Yet one thing. Let them renounce for ever the exclusive honour of approaching the Prince; beg of him to do away with the entire waste-heap of useless court officials, of honours, of rights which makes the court of to-day the object of contempt. Cease to be chamberlains and lords who call our King 'their King'; relieve him of lackeys and flunkeys, the frivolous excrescences of an evil age, that age of Louis XIV., which it seemed necessary for all princes in the world to ape. Step back from this court, the court of idle, pampered prigs of nobility, so that we can have a court of happy, joyful people,

where every member of this people can see his king and tell him he is the first of a favoured nation. Therefore we *no longer want an upper house.* There is but one people, not a first and second, and there cannot be more than one House of Representatives. Let this house be a noble, plain edifice, a high-arched roof on strong, tall pillars: how would this building be spoilt if a mean-looking partition were put through it, so that you had two small chambers instead of one of large size?

"We demand, further, the unconditional right of every *adult* born in the land to a vote and eligibility to election: the poorer he is the more he stands in need of help; the more natural is his claim to share in the framing of laws which will serve to protect him against poverty and indigence. Furthermore, our 'Republican' efforts call for a *great national defence*, not a standing army, nor an encamped communal guard. What must be granted you is neither a reduction in the one nor an increase in the other, but a new creation, which step by step entering into its duties, will absorb army and guard to become a large, useful, reformed national defence destruc-

tive to caste. If those who have hitherto existed at enmity with each other were united into one class, to which all belong, which sprang to life on the foothold of Germany by the breath of God, do you believe that we would then be at our goal? No; then only would we properly begin. Then the question as to *the cause of all the misery in our social surroundings of to-day* must be looked into determinedly and unwaveringly; it concerns the decision as to whether man, the crown of creation, with his so elevated, intellectual, and artistic capacities, with physical strength so disposed to activity, is to be merely enslaved by a sickly metal, the most useless, unquickening product of nature.

"It must be discussed whether the inherent merit is to be attributed to this stamped metal which makes the monarch of creation, the image of God, subject and tributary to it; whether the power is to be given to money to degrade the free, beautiful will of man to the basest passions—to avarice, to usury, to the hankering after fraud. This will be a great struggle for freedom among suffering, dishonoured mankind; it will not cost a drop of blood, not a tear, not even a pang: nothing

but a conviction, which must only be gained to force it irrevocably on our minds—the conviction *that the highest happiness, the most perfect welfare of all must be achieved if so many active beings as the soil can support engage in their multifarious pursuits, in the exchange of the products of their labour, and in well-conducted communities to enrich and render each other happy.* We will recognise that the most heinous plight of a community of human beings is when the exertions of its individuals are assuredly hampered, when the inherent force has not full scope and perfect outlet, so long as—the sole condition—the earth yields sufficient for their nourishment. We must recognise that the human race is supported by the *activity of its members*, and not by the reputed circulation of *money*. We must lay clear our fundamental principle in such a way as will leave no room for doubt. God will enlighten us so that we may find the true *law* whereby this fundamental principle will be introduced into life, and this demoniacal conception of money, with all its hideous retinue of shameless usury, paper-swindling, interest, and banker's speculation, like the evil spirit of a nightmare, will vanish from sight. This will be the *complete*

emancipation of the human race, the accomplishment of Christ's pure doctrine, so enviously concealed under pompous dogmas invented to hold in check rude barbarians, to prepare for an evolution whose more ennobling perfection we are now marching towards with full consciousness. Do you scent communism in this? Are you so foolish or evil-minded to declare the needed deliverance of the human race from the debasing, most demoralising, servitude to the commonest dross equivalent to the accomplishment of the preposterous and senseless doctrine of communism? Will you not understand that in this doctrine of the mathematically equal division of goods and produce there is nothing more than a thoughtless attempt to solve that ever-present question which, in its utter impossibility, pronounces its own judgment of abortiveness? But is the case itself to be thrown aside as objectionable and senseless because that particular doctrine is so? *Take heed to yourselves.* The fact of thirty-three years of undisturbed peace shows you human society in such a state of disorder and pauperisation that at the end of these years around you hunger in its most hideous form stares you in the face. Be

careful before it is too late. Do not lavish *alms*, but acknowledge justice and the right of mankind ordained by God, or a day may come when nature, so insanely mocked, may fortify itself for a brutal struggle, in which the wild cry of victory would in reality *be that very communism* which, if only able to take root and gain the mastery but for the shortest space of time, yet therein enough, in its nature, would happen to exterminate for ages without leaving a trace behind, the achievements of two thousand years of civilisation. Do you think I *threaten*? No; I *warn*!

"If we have arrived, then, so far in our republican efforts as to solve this most important of all questions for the happiness and prosperity of the political state, and if we have been dignified with the rights of a free nation, shall we, then, be at the goal of our endeavours? No! Then there will be a proper beginning. If we have arrived at a complete regeneration of society by the lawful solution of the question of emancipation; if a new race springs into life capable of exercising freely its energies, we have then only gained the power to advance to the highest problem of civilisation—viz., its *propagation* and *accomplishment*.

Then we will sail over the seas to found a new Germany and to enrich it with the fruits of our struggles and efforts; to bring up and nourish the noblest godlike children; we will do things better than the *Spaniards*, who turned the New World into a priestly slaughterhouse, different from the *English*, who made it serve their mercenary pursuits. We want it to be German and glorious; from its rising to its setting the sun shall shine on a beautiful free Germany; no downtrodden, unfree people shall dwell at its boundaries, as at those of the mother country; the rays of *German freedom and generosity* shall invigorate and transform the Cossack and the Frenchman, the Bushman and Chinaman. You see our republican efforts have no goal nor end; unceasingly they strive from century to century to effect the happiness of the entire human race. Is this a dream, a Utopia? It is so indeed if we begin with little faith and narrow minds to weigh this and question that; it is not so if we act joyfully and courageously, and let every day see us take a fresh step in advance.

"Now, however, you ask, is this to be achieved *with* a kingship? Never for an instant have I

allowed myself to let its existence drop out of sight; if you have considered it impossible, then it is you yourselves who pronounced its death warrant. If you, however, as I do, consider it more than possible, so were the Republic justified, and all we have to demand would be *that the King himself become the first and most rightful republican.* Who is more called to be the most *faithful, trusty* republican than the *Prince* himself? RESPUBLICA means the affairs of the people: which individual is more called than the Prince to devote himself *to the people*, with all his heart, with all his powers of understanding, with all his aspirations? What would move him to belittle himself by devoting his attention to only a small part of his people, when he had gained the conviction of his noble calling? Let any single one of us cherish never so much the warmest feelings for the universal good, he can never become such a pure republican as the prince, because the prince is concerned not for a part but for the whole, while each of us has day by day to devote himself systematically to providing for wants. And wherein would lie any sacrifice on the part of the prince in making his duties correspond with this acknowledged

unspeakably noble calling? Would there be any sacrifice in looking around on free civilians instead of on '*subjects*'? Our law has decreed the abolition of this imaginary distinction, and he who confirmed these laws fulfils its meaning with such faithfulness that the *declaration* of the discontinuance of subjection would not appear to him any sacrifice. Would it be of the nature of a sacrifice to him if he parted with the remnant of idle ostentation around his court, with its outlived honours, titles, and orders? How would we hold in small esteem the truest, most upright prince of our time if he were to regard the fulfilment of such a desire in the light of a sacrifice on his part, when we might take it for granted that a real sacrifice would be willingly borne by him if he only knew that thereby every hindrance preventing the cordial expression of the nation's love would be swept away!

"How are we justified in prying into the inner heart of this exceptional prince in giving expression to convictions concerning him which we would not hold proper in the case of many of our equals? It is the spirit of our age; it is the unparalleled condition of affairs as it is brought

by the present to light, which endows the simplest mind with the eye of a prophet. The stress towards decisive action is in us; there are two encampments among the civilised nations of Europe: the one resounds with the cry *Republic*, the other with the cry *Monarchy*! Will you deny that it is now a matter of decision, that in it is contained and conceived what stirs human society to the depths of its passions? Will you refuse to recognise the divinely inspired spirit of the age, and maintain that all this has already occurred in the past, and as soon as the fit of intoxication has passed things will relapse into their former condition? In that case God has smitten you with blindness for ever. No, in this age we further recognise the need of *decision*. What is false cannot endure, and the monarchy—that is, Absolute Rule—is false: such it has become through constitutionalism. Now, he who despairs of all reconciliation, let him throw himself boldly and defiantly into the arms of the republic; he who still hopes, let him direct a searching look towards the leaders of the existing government. He knows that if the battle concerns itself with the monarchy, it is only in exceptional cases the *person of the prince*, but in every case

the *party* which selfishly thrusts the prince in the front, that is attacked—the party which fights under his shadow for its own advantage and vanity. That is the *party* which has to be conquered. Shall the battle be a bloody one? It must be so, it must hit both party and prince if no means exist to effect a reconciliation. But we see in the prince the very means wanted; if he is the genuine free father of his people he can with one noble-hearted resolve ensure peace, where otherwise war is inevitable. Let us now seek a prince on any European throne who has been chosen by God to fulfil this noble work. What do we see? What infatuated, utterly degraded beings, incapable of sustaining any high calling! What spectacles do Naples, Spain, Portugal present to us? What sickening feelings fill our breasts when we contemplate German lands—Hanover, Hesse, Bavaria. Alas! let us close the recital. God declared his judgment on the bad and on the weak; their weakness spreads from member to member.

"We turn our glance from abroad and look into our own home, and there we *see a prince who is loved by his own people*, not on account of devotion to hereditary ancestry. No! from pure love to

himself, for his person. We love him because of what he is; we love him for his virtues, his honesty, his gentleness. Now with my full heart I cry loudly and joyfully, '*That is the man of Providence.*'

"Does Prussia wish to maintain a monarchy, it is for the sake of supremacy. A vain conception which will soon vanish. Does Austria wish to maintain its prince, it knows that its dynasty alone can hold together an incongruous mass of countries with divided interests—a hopeless condition, which immediately will collapse. Does the Saxon, on the other hand, desire the kinghood, he is drawn to it by a *pure love for its prince*, in the happy consciousness of being able to call this best his own. It is not in this case a cold diplomatic *conception*, it is the warm *conviction of love.* And this love shall *decide*; not only for the present can it do so, *it can for ever decide.* Filled with this unspeakably momentous thought, I cry to you with the enthusiasm of conviction, *We are Republicans.* We are by the achievements of our time near the establishment of a republic; but mortifications and pitfalls *surround* the name; let them be avoided by one word from our prince.

We do not wish to cry aloud the republic. No! *This, the noblest prince, the most worthy king,* let him utter it :—

'I DECLARE SAXONY A FREE STATE.'

"The first law of the free state, which will secure its maintenance, let it be, *The highest executive power rests in the ROYAL HOUSE OF WETTIN and be hereditary by the right of primogeniture.*

"The oath which we swear to this state and this law will never be broken, not because we have sworn it (how many oaths are sworn in the thoughtless enthusiasm of ceremony), but because of the *conviction* with which we have sworn that *by that declaration, by that law, a new age of imperishable prosperity will be founded, not alone for Saxony—no! for Germany, for Europe—in virtue of the most beneficial and most conclusive reciprocity.* He who has promised this boldly believes with irresistible confidence that the oath which he has sworn even to his king never has been truer than that he has to-day attested.

"Would now the downfall of the monarchy be an outcome of this? Yes! But thereby the emancipation of the kinghood would be proclaimed.

Do not be led astray, ye who seek your 'constitutional monarchy on the broadest democratic basis.' You are, as far as it concerns the latter (basis), either dishonest, or, if it is possible you are sincere, you torture slowly to death the puppet monarchy set up by you. Every step forward on this democratic basis is a new encroachment on the power of the monarch that is the *one ruler*. The principle itself is the completest mockery of monarchy, which can only be thought of as *absolute*. Every step forward in constitutionalism is a humiliation for the ruler, because it is a vote of want of confidence in the monarch. How could love and confidence prosper in this constant and often so unworthily fostered strife between two entirely opposing principles? Shame and humiliation embitter the existence of the monarch; let us deliver him therefore from this miserable half-existence; let us put an end to the monarchy, for absolutism is made impossible through the rule of the people (democracy); but let us emancipate the kinghood in its most real sense. At the head of the free state (republic) the hereditary king will exactly be that which, according to his noblest signification, he ought to be, the first of

the people, the freest of the free. Would not this be the most beautiful German fulfilment of Christ's saying, '*But he that is greatest amongst you shall be your servant*'? for whereas he serves the freedom of all he exalts the conception of freedom to the highest, divinest consciousness.

"The further back we make our researches in German history into the meaning of kinghood, the more convincing is it that this new-won idea is in truth only a restoration; the course of the historical development of the kingdom will, in returning to itself, be at its goal, and the widest deviation we will recognise in monarchism, this strange un-German conception.

"Shall we now gather signatures in the form of a petition to express our earnest wishes? I am convinced hundreds of thousands would sign, for its contents would offer a reconciliation of all opposing parties, at least all of those who mean honestly. But only one signature can be right and proper—that of *the beloved prince*, whom we from our inmost heart wish a happier fate and a more fortunate position than is at present his lot.

"A MEMBER OF THE FATHERLAND SOCIETY.

"DRESDEN, *June 14th*, 1848."

Had this speech, at the time it was delivered, received the consideration and thought which was its due, much perversity and human ingenuity would have been required to conceal its drift and misinterpret its meaning. However, it was neither perversity nor deliberation which was needed to obscure this sensible and straightforward appeal for the consideration calmly and premeditately of what must eventually prove the chief contentious matter of the future—viz., the King's position. The ingrained selfishness of human nature, bolstered up by all the requisites and agencies of court life, had nothing to fear from a Capellmeister belonging to and in the pay of the court. In conventional life the mere act of trying to cleanse one's nest is called fouling it, so completely does everything have its true meaning turned upside down. Wagner was particularly anxious to put new life into theatrical matters, and since this involved the ousting of certain favoured individuals who had no knowledge of what they directed, to permit of practical individuals replacing them, what more was necessary to give Wagner a bad name at court? The very title given to the speech distinguishes,

on historical grounds, between kingship and monarchy. The question is, how the efforts of confessed Republicans affect the ideas of kingship. The German King, historically considered, was not an individual who was shut off by a swarm of courtiers from his people. He is, as Wagner has considered the matter in his essay of "The Wibelungen," a patriarch, the head of a family, which reality, in the long course of years, had drifted into another conception—that of monarchy, *i.e.*, absolute rulership—hence to a nonentity under constitutionalism, less and less able to fulfil the duties involved in the idea of kingship. The more the constitutional monarchy grew the more the king's liberty declined and therewith the welfare of the people. In *Lohengrin* the fatherly treatment of Elsa by Heinrich is beautifully illustrative of Wagner's idea of kingship. The democrats were opposed to bureaucracy, and bureaucracy was opposed to both absolute monarchy and patriarchal kingship. There was invented the constitutional monarchy, by which the means and ends of rule were degraded to flatter the vanity of that class which Wagner hated throughout his life—the go-betweens, the

Jewish element, who thrive parasitically. People may agree with this or not; we are solely concerned here with the intelligibleness of the argument.

Wagner's speech, therefore, concerns the position of the kingship in the face of an impending revolution. Frederick William of Prussia had indeed called himself a republican, and the meaning of the word requires no straining to connect it with the idea of patriarchal government. The question which interested Wagner was how to emancipate both king and people from the evils arising out of the degradation of the privileges of each. The expression monarchy characterised the absolute rule of one individual. This, however, was made a lie by constitutionalism. Kingship, on the other hand, connoted the welfare of the people themselves, of which the King was merely the head, not shut off from the people, but one of them. Welfare is freedom, and freedom the exercise of natural functions directly fulfilling their own purpose.

The speech is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the conception of the early relationship of ruler and people and the causes of its corruption, the second the harmonising of the original trust

with the affairs of the people, otherwise the Republic. Mr. Chamberlain divides the first into five practical proposals, which mostly correspond with the demands of the democratic party. They are the abolition of privileges arising from rank, establishment of manhood suffrage and electoral rights, creation of a national guard of defence, emancipation of mankind from the debasement of bodily activity to usury and gold, and finally, the acquirement of colonies. The impracticability of such propositions forms the subject of much irony, as if the practicability of passing forms is an established fact. If everything flows, as some philosophy not quite antiquated assures us, the attempts made to regard the government of the hour, of the day, as an established result of past wisdom and deliberation, which unthinking sentimentalists, pervaded with horrible vices, wish to wreck, are not in accordance with actuality. Wagner, in fact, grasped the essentials of things and tried to lead back to those essentials without devoting himself to the maintenance of useless formalities. The chief cause of the evil lay in the subjection of man's energy to the acquisition of gold. The

natural vigour and ability of mankind were rendered unprofitable, useless to recompense generously him who exercises them with their produce; their power was slavishly directed to the further and further gain of a metal, whose possession controlled the distribution of what man's energy raised, and which was needed by man to satisfy his natural demands. This is the subject-matter of the *Ring of the Nibelung*, which, however, recognises that the more material side of the problem is already contained in the spiritual—namely, the exercise of Love. It shows the same rooted aversion in Wagner to the employment of means towards selfish ends, or, to express it otherwise, the elevation of means into ends. It is impossible to demonstrate further this root aspect of life. It is too simple to bear demonstration. In trying to make Wagner clear, one always feels as if truths must be dragged to the front with all possible force, which need no force at all. Every one feels instinctively already what is wanted to be said. Having so far demonstrated the corruption of the early ideas of the people's relations to the kingship, and at the same time keeping in view the altered conditions

of a more intellectual age, Wagner denounces the communistic distribution of goods and the dangers of a purely materialistic treatment of the problem. He then recommends the acquirement of colonies. Could this have been acted on then, what would Germany have saved itself now?

The proposition first laid down is then reverted to, and that which Wotan himself effects in the *Ring of the Nibelung* (allowing for poetical licence), namely, the self-emancipation of the ruler from the sordid conditions surrounding him, is requested of the king. In dramatic treatment, where ideas are embodied, the personage representing the idea disappears. In actual life the idea (*i.e.* in this case the false idea) alone would be dissipated, but no parallel is to be drawn between a personage Wotan and a personage Friedrich August. Thus the same principle is involved in Wagner's speech as is involved in his Drama. The King is not called on to make any sacrifice. He however is credited with sufficient generosity to make a sacrifice if the welfare of the people called for it. Verily Wagner judged human nature by the goodness and uprightness of his own. His optimism is boundless,

and would almost have persuaded Schopenhauer himself to become an optimist, if he had had ears for such music as Wagner wrote. The veriest pessimist is an optimist when listening to Siegfried and Brünnhilde in the last act of *Siegfried*, or the prelude to the *Dusk of the Gods.*

Wagner closes his speech with a eulogy of the King, whose individual merits had indeed been recognised by the democratic party. The person of the King had never been made the subject of attack, and this fact distinctly proves that the intuitive sense of the people aimed at the heart of the evil; and had the court considered Wagner's speech in the sense his words and attitude imply, the whole revolt might have been obviated, and the reforms, granted afterwards, might have been effected without the humiliation of civil war.

The third subject is Wagner's *Jesus of Nazareth.* It belongs to the same year as the above speech, namely 1848, and of all Wagner's writings gives the clearest and simplest explanation of his ground principles.

It could scarcely be possible that a man so imbued with love for his fellow-creatures and

indignation at the injustices they had to suffer would overlook a teaching which sufficiently summed up its principles in "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another," and "Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much." The almost indefinable love which lies at the root of Wagner's ideas is most clearly explained, as far as ordinary language can do so, in this sketch of a drama, *Jesus of Nazareth.* Love, with Wagner, during this period does not, it is true, absolutely confine itself within the limits of sensuousness. In the *Art Work of the Future,** and in the *Communication to my Friends,*† there is sufficient evidence to prove that to Wagner the highest form of love must be entirely chaste; but this idea, forming as it does the subject-matter of *Parsifal,* is not that of the *Ring of the Nibelung.* Sexuality is subordinated to love, not precluded. The reason given in *Jesus of Nazareth,* why Jesus does not marry, is that in him the seed of David dies, in order by death, at the hands of the law, to leave

* See *Art Work of the Future,* Eng. Trans., vol. i., p. 167. Mr. Ellis, as mentioned in his preface, has omitted a passage. The full text is p. 160, vol. iii. of the *Ges. Sch.*

† See Eng. Trans. vol. i., pp. 322-3.

divine love as a legacy to mankind. By divine love, however, is meant that which we gather from the plan of the drama. The following was temporarily put into Jesus' mouth: "I deliver you from sin by revealing to you the eternal law of the spirit, which is its essence not its bondage. The law hitherto given you was the bondage of your nature in the flesh; without this ye had no sin, but ye had obeyed the law of nature. Now, however, the letter was placed above your flesh, and the law which taught you to regard the nature of the flesh as a sin brought you to death, since ye now sinned by doing that which ye would not do according to the law. Now I loose you from the law, which deadened you, by giving you the law of the spirit, which makes you living. There is now no longer any sin except that against the spirit; it can, however, only be committed unwittingly, and therewith is no longer any sin; who, however, in truth knows the spirit cannot any longer sin, for this law does not bind, but is itself the fulness of the spirit: the law, however, is love, and what ye do in love cannot be sinful; in it your flesh is glorified, for it is the eternal law,

All satisfaction, which ye desire, ye find alone in love: how could ye now wish any other thing than the law which alone gives satisfaction to your desire? Were the flesh against love, it were against itself; hitherto, however, it was against the law, because the law was against love. In the law therefore lay sin; now I kill this law and therewith destroy sin. I deliver you therefore from sin by giving you love. But God is love, and through love He sent you His Son, whose brethren are all men and by love equal to Him." Wagner now explains further *in propriâ personâ*. "Every creature loves, and love is the law of life for all created. If mankind now made a law which limited love in order to attain a purpose which lies beyond human nature (that is power, rule—but above all, the protection of property) he therein sinned against the law of his own existence, and therewith brought about his own death; now, however, that we know love, and fortify ourselves against the law of the false spirit, which makes us elevated above the unconscious creatures by the attainment of a knowledge of the eternal law that from the very beginning was the elemental law, and inasmuch as we know

this law we practise love, and therewith are at every time creators with God and by consciousness of love become God Himself. . . . The first law crystallised itself in marriage, since it supplanted love. The essence of love is, however, eternal: a pair who without compulsion turn to each other can only do this from pure love; and in virtue of its nature this love, as long as it is never disturbed, cannot cease in time, for it is the mutual complement which in man and woman sustains the fount of perfect contentment, and by fruitfulness, as well as by love bestowed on the offspring, it draws its regular impulse and revival. Under such perfect conditions arose the idea of property: the man belonged to the woman, the woman to the man, the children to the parents, the parents to the children; this relationship provided love with continuity, the continual relationship embodied itself in the conception of property, and this grew up especially by the rejection of coercive attacks from outward;* that which loves, belongs to itself and to

* One remembers here how during the revolution Wagner had slips printed to hand round to the soldiers, asking them if they would oppose the entrance of the hated Prussian troops. See *Glasenapp*, vol. ii., p. 308.

nobody else, least of all to him who is not loved. (Here we must think of Hunding's claim to Sieglinde.) The natural right of the individual was thus credited equally to those who were attached to him by love; thus the conception of marriage evolved its sacredness, its right, and this became embodied in law. This right, however, henceforth became of necessity a wrong when it was not through and through permeated by love; it became completely sinful as soon as its consecration was actually *opposed* to love, and indeed from two points of view—(1) when marriage was concluded without love, (2) when parental right transformed itself into coercion towards the children. If a woman were espoused by a man whom she did not love, and if he fulfilled the letter of the marriage law towards her, she thereby became his property: the stress towards freedom through love became therefore a sin—the actual satisfying of her love was only attainable by adultery. In the same manner children who feel their love budding to free expansion, if the parents did not exercise their natural right of property in the meaning implied by love—namely, alone in the sense of the free love of

the children themselves—must exercise their desire for love by breaking the law. In the meaning of love, however, they did not sin; but the law, inasmuch as it degraded the right of love by making it bear the meaning of possession, opposed itself as an obstacle to the eternal evolution of love; it replaced a love of eternity by one of the moment. Equally so it was with the law of property: by it love, in so far as it expresses itself in mankind as a stress towards satisfaction in the enjoyment of nature and of its products, crystallised itself in the exclusive right of the individual to nature in excess of enjoyment: by this right I warn off another from the enjoyment which has already satisfied me, and hereby seek not my satisfaction in enjoyment itself, but in possession. Thus the sin against property arises solely out of the law of property. The being who by stress of nature feels himself forced to sin against nature commits an outrage alone, in virtue of the existence of law, not of himself. Thus Jesus delivers human nature by annulling the law, which by its bondage appears sinful — therein that He proclaims the divine law under the

shelter of which our whole existence finds its justification."

Love, freedom, ideal manhood, were identical. No love was possible which was not brought about by nature. Everywhere man is confronted with the trouble raised by hemming his individual energy; everywhere the moral necessity of restricting this individual energy for the benefit of less favoured individuals confronts him. *Noblesse oblige.* How is the predicate to permeate the subject with its quality of service, without drawing from the subject a surrender of its nobility? How is the subject to maintain its character of nobility without freely bestowing its superior power? Wagner believed what every one professing optimism, if he thinks out his case, must believe; and yet so little is this observed, that this most glorious artistic revealer of optimism meets with little but scorn from critics who notice him, and complete silence from the prominent men of literature. And yet there is no one to put beside him, or who is within measure of him. Nietzsche knew this till he detected in Wagner's work the elements of a deeper principle, and in growing cognisant of this he detached himself from Wagner to assume,

on the publication of *Parsifal*, open hostility. Can it be that the average scholar is afraid to look Wagner straight in the face, and leaves misrepresentation to the hangers-on? It will certainly be an interesting criticism of Wagner which comes from the pen of a recognised English scholar, and finds favour, not necessarily on account of its agreement but on account of its fairness and acquaintance with its subject, among those who have been drawn by pure affection to Wagner and his writings.

To continue: the birth of Jesus took place outside the law, therefore it was a birth of love; the law compelled Him to die, and it was a death for love. This shows the eternal nature of love and the temporary nature of law. Love sanctifies marriage, but marriage does not sanctify love. The individual man pays to the community the last debt of his egoistic nature by death. Death is the final loving sacrifice of every creature for the sake of sustaining and enriching all. It is merely the last act of an evolutionary process common to nature. In a community where love reigned supreme, death would in every case be a natural process of exhaustion, never

the outcome of disease nor of violence. Egoism is the nature of infancy and of woman. As the growth to manhood progresses, there unfolds itself the possibility of the exercise of unselfishness. This is love which always gives but never receives. This giving is the first action of the sexual impulse. The energy of man imparts itself, and thereby man voluntarily deprives itself of his life-power. Therewith the energy is transmitted by love; in the case of the ascetic, it is not love which prompts him to chastity, since therein is contained the element of egoism in not parting with his life-power, and nature, always revenging an infraction of its laws, leaves the ascetic a joyless, lonely creature. Egoism is receiving. Nature bestows on man her gifts. In this act man is egoistic. In parting freely with this gift he bestows love. The community stands in a position antagonistic to the individual man, and in breaking down this egoistic barrier the individual man changes his egoism into love. The woman is egoistic. She receives or only returns what she has received, but in the suffering of delivery and affection for her child she expiates her egoistic fault. The bestowal on the part of man and the receptivity

on the part of woman is the order of nature, and egoism purifies itself in the love of its bestowing freely what it received. The first sin was a marriage without love. Life is the evolution of man in egoism, and love the bestowal of its power for the sake of the community. Law puts an obstacle in the way of this bestowal, and turns it to account for pure egoism, in which, taking alone is the end. Law is loveless because it compels. All acts of love are free. Nature gives freely, she has no law except love, and the redemption of man consists in the annulling of the law.

Thankfulness, since it does not originate in a desire to give freely, holds, in Wagner's estimation, a subordinate rank. It presupposes a giving, while love consists in giving. Thankfulness is merely the laudation of a benefit received—the response to an act of love. Complete satisfaction of the thankful impulse would result in requiting fully the act of giving which called the thankful impulse forth, and in this it would neutralise the action of love, thus proclaiming itself the negation of love; and expended, as it merely is, in response to the urgings of gratitude, it would not justify therewith any claim to be entitled love, because

this act must be completely disinterested, and cannot be called forth by any feeling of obligation. Love is impossible where freedom of action is impossible. Since, however, thankfulness cannot be thought of without partaking of the nature of recompense for a previously bestowed benefit, it can never be the action of love itself.

The outcome of Jesus' teaching is summed up in the words, "I am come to bind what ye have loosed, and to loose what ye have bound"; and again, "I die through the law for love's sake, so that ye may know that love and life are everlasting, law and death temporal." In the "Communication to my Friends," Jesus' death is expressed as the "moment of despair." It is "the imperfect utterance of that human instinct which drives the individual into revolt against a loveless whole." Wagner in a footnote says, "It will scarcely fail to be noticed how much the *artist* alone was concerned in this conception." That Wagner, except by omission, in nowise does violence to the profounder view of Christianity, will be evident. Indeed, if we are to measure his artistic conception, the mere recognition of its negative attitude to the law places it on a higher plane than any

other which defaces Christ's doctrine by protecting itself under the law or employing the law's methods of acquiring power and possession. In this matter we see Wagner, true to his nature, trying to solve these problems by taking a step in the direction of primitive conformity to the essence of Christian doctrine. All attempts in this direction receive from conventional religion the name of non-conformity, thus giving further proof of how entirely the current language is applied by conventional rule in its inverted sense to warn the simple public against the bare approach of the truth. Wagner gives references to a hundred and three chapters in the New Testament, of which fifty-six belong to the Evangelistic and forty-seven to the Apostolical writings. The Old Testament is not taken into account, a matter which should not be left unnoticed. How carefully he had studied the question need not be urged. The lesson is the same as that of the *Ring of the Nibelung*. Therewith it is admitted that the deeper Christian doctrine is not recognised, but it is equally insisted on that the essence of Christianity is more nearly approached than by any sect or Church—some Churches consider

they are not sects. As a most comprehensive summing-up in the fewest possible words of the social question, the following paragraphs from the posthumous *Entwürfe, Gedanken, Fragmente,* may be quoted:—

"The most perfect condition on the earth is that in which none of the wants of human nature, so infinitely augmented by fellowship, can arise, which nature is not capable of satisfying.

"Man's happiness consists in enjoying; enjoying is the satisfaction of a want; the road leading from wanting to satisfying is activity. Want by itself is suffering; by the enjoyment of satisfying arises gladness; the surrounding creation has given mankind everything for the satisfying of its wants, for nature itself could not bring forth mankind before it had produced means for its nourishment, etc.; no man has been created in a desert.

"Fellowship by its complexity augments the wants of mankind, but therewith as well, by the satisfying of these augmented wants, enjoyment —hence gladness. A fellowship which augments the wants of each individual, but does not realise them to each individual, is sinful, and produces the terrible condition of misery and vice, which we

know since the beginning of history, and which is now becoming more and more obvious. This is despotism in all its different forms. Freedom, on the other hand, consists in this, that to each individual, as well as to the fellowship, using the means leading from want to enjoyment (*i.e.*, therefore, to the activity of the one as well as of the other), no obstacle be opposed, and the one duty of fellowship can only consist therein, that the natural obstacles which oppose themselves to the satisfying of the wants augmented by fellowship itself, be overcome by mutual activity. Enjoyment, by satisfying the physical wants of mankind, is beneficial to the individual, because it nourishes the human body. The satisfaction of the want for love is beneficial to fellowship, for it increases the race. Love is therefore the mother of friendship; it must therefore alone be its one principle."

"Want by itself is suffering." This is what Wagner says long before he heard of Schopenhauer, who expresses himself in the *Welt als Wille*: "We call then its (*i.e.*, will or want) restraint by an obstacle which interposes itself between it and its temporary goal, suffering; on the other hand, its attainment of the goal satisfaction, welfare,

happiness." The difference reveals the same problem as the earth, the elephant, and the tortoise. Wagner did not ask at that time whereon the tortoise rested, and Schopenhauer did, without finding any answer which partook of materialism. Wagner believed that want could find satisfaction, and this led him to believe that with that satisfaction mankind could reach happiness. Schopenhauer proved this to be impossible, and no answer can be given to refute this impossibility, least of all by orthodoxy. The answer can only lie in the most profound signification of renunciation, and this leads to the complete dissipation of all our sensuous knowledge.

It is further interesting to note how questions now occupying men's minds are summed up in a phrase or paragraph by Wagner, wherewith the subordinate problem is gauged and consigned to its place with but few words, serving merely to illumine the more direct—simple or complex as one chooses to regard it—and universal problem which occupied him. Professor Caldwell, in his book on Schopenhauer, says he (Schopenhauer) is inclined to maintain "that the highest reading of experience is not to be found in demonstration

or in reasoning, but in observation of actual fact" (p. 152). In *Opera and Drama* Wagner says, p. 168, "The first and weightiest step toward knowledge consisted, therefore, in grasping the phenomena of life according to their actuality, and that at first without passing any judgment on them." If any book nowadays is written which tries to show the secondary part reason plays in determining our actions, the insight is considered as something striking. Again, in *Justice*, p. 150, Herbert Spencer says: "Along with the establishment of gregarious habits there arises a secondary law. When a number of individuals live in such proximity that they are severally apt to impede one another's actions, and so to prevent one another from achieving desired results, then, to avoid antagonism and consequent dispersion, their actions have to be mutually restrained; each must carry on its actions subject to the limitation that it shall not interfere with the like actions of others more than its own actions are interfered with."

There is not much to choose in explicitness, but something in terseness, between this and the above quoted paragraphs from the *Entwürfe*. If

now Mr. Spencer could only, after laying aside his moralising and theorising, write a *Lohengrin* and a *Ring of the Nibelung*, how should we hold him in our estimation? What clergymen could accuse him of stealing their thunder? It is fast becoming a truism that crime is in direct relationship to irresponsibilty and incapacity on the part of those who undertake to govern us. In the *Art Work of the Future*, p. 208, we read, "Yet reflect! that this rabble is in no wise a normal product of real human nature, but rather the artificial outcome of your denaturalised culture; that all the crimes and abominations with which ye now upbraid this rabble, are only the despairing gestures of the battle which the true nature of man wages against its hideous oppressor, modern civilisation; and that these revolting features are nowise the real face of nature, but rather the reflection of the hypocritical mask of your state—and criminal—culture." Green, in his preface to the *Short History*, tells us his history is not one of kings or conquests: "I have preferred to pass lightly and briefly over the details of foreign wars and diplomacies, the personal adventures of kings and nobles, the pomp of courts or the intrigues of

favourites, and to dwell at length on the incidents of that constitutional, intellectual, and social advance in which we read the history of the nation itself." Wagner knew the worth of this, and adds an important feature, which only a part of the German nation has yet taken to heart (*Opera and Drama*, p. 173): "In order to arrange the excess of historical facts for easy survey by our eye, we are accustomed to regard the most prominent personalities alone, and in them to consider as embodied the spirit of a period. As such personalities, the wisdom of the chronicler has mostly bequeathed us the rulers—those from whose will and ordering the historic undertakings and state-economy were supposed to have issued."

Wagner also says, "To take our whole art-literary doings at one hasty glance, let us range their notable phenomena in the following order." There then follows, for the next thirty pages, such a concise and searching treatment of the essential conditions of literary and dramatic work as no one else could have written. Now indeed, with all the experience of another forty-five years, it seems more of the nature of a prophecy than of a judgment. But it is no prophecy. Just as Wagner

knew the relative worth of the works of contemporary composers, and wrote and spoke of them as we all do now, he sounded the depth of the contemporary artistic tendency. It might spread over a large amount of surface, and has done so. Its intent was fully grasped. What we know as the Zola and Ibsen questions are in their respective essentials comprised in less than a page to each,* and the value of history and burgher society for artistic treatment lucidly expounded. State, Church, Individuality, Society, have their opposing interests brought to a focus, without which the dramatic artist in vain tried to portray life in its actuality as contained in romance.

Ruskin tells us, in *Fors Clavigera*, "Men associate in parties by sacrificing their opinions, or by having none worth sacrificing." It will not be generally considered that Wagner sacrificed his opinions, nor can it be asserted truthfully that he had none. In the three examples of Wagner's views considered here, the most practical is the Fatherland speech, but at the same time it is not the most practical instance of Wagner's constructive work in actual life. A better instance is to be found in his *Plan*

* See pp. 148-9, and 176-7 of *Opera and Drama*.

for the Organisation of a National Theatre in Saxony. As far as *Opera and Drama* is concerned, it was certainly written in great haste with the Siegfried drama in his mind; and any one who chooses to regard the annulment of the state as a fixed idea can consider that Wagner sacrificed his opinions.* Even in that case it was not to associate with a party. Wagner did not alter his opinions on the relationship between state and individual; but in considering his artistic exposition of that relationship, it cannot be demanded of him that he should portray the actual facts of the one relation more than of the other. No one ever went into the Rhine and robbed Rhine daughters of their treasure, and no state ever recognised that its authority in the main is injurious to the propagation of truth and consciously abrogated authority. But individuals clinging to law, to Church, and to court, do grasp at gold, at orders, at titles, and at power; and individuals alone and in parties have renounced the protection of constituted authority on account of principles. Even a government has stopped a war after its troops had suffered defeat, when it was quite within its power thoroughly to

* See Dedication of 2nd ed. of *Opera and Drama*, vol. ii., p. 4.

avenge the ignominy! This to some is a disgrace, to others an honour.

What the state actually is does not submit itself to easy definition. Every attempt to define it without the licence of epigram will result in versions equally idealistic (or vague, if one chooses) as Wagner's *Ring*. If any one can so embody opposite views in such another art work, conveying to our feelings the same conviction of its artistic sincerity and coherency, we will not quarrel with it on the ground that the exposition demands the portraiture of men and women as we see them in court, on the Stock Exchange, or in Exeter Hall. The portraits, however, must be presented as objects in nature carrying their moral, not intimates of God Almighty superior to their fellow-creatures. The problem of the *Ring* is comprehensible to the simplest mind; therefore it is popular. With the carping, narrow-sighted critic, and with the slaves of fashion, it is not popular, because it is not comprehensible to them —that is to say, it does not fit their egoism. The work unsparingly denounces the shallow code of morality which allows such people to pose as moral and respectable, no matter in what false-

hoods or vanities they indulge. No; their serious dramatic wants are supplied in pseudo-religious plays with comic relief—Holy Antigone!—advertised by cunningly entrapped opinions of worthy individuals in the forefront of society, who have divulged a marvellously convenient interest in the success of the religious drama. Our question, however, is with this society, "How it arose, how it learnt to suck its life's blood out of apparently conflicting potencies; how, for example, Christendom, degraded through hypocrisy and half-heartedness, allowed itself as guardian of this society and of its property to countenance the oppression of the people, and how science and scholarship, only too pliant, were impressed into its service: all of this Wagner detected throughout the ages* in order, at the end of his observation, to rouse himself up in disgust and rage; out of pity for the people he had become a revolutionary." †

* Not like Mr. Gladstone, who, suiting politics, detected it throughout fifty years. See *supra*, pp. 31, 32.

† Neitzsche's *Werke*, vol. i., p. 549.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DRAMA.

ON p. 191 of Wagner's *Opera and Drama* we read, "To-day we only need to faithfully expound the *myth of Œdipus* according to its inmost essence, and we in it win an intelligible picture of the whole history of mankind from the beginnings of society to the inevitable downfall of the state." Wagner has just graphically recounted the Œdipus myth, illustrating therewith the fate awaiting individual action exercised devotedly in the service of love. The state, taking custom as its mentor, laid down what was to be observed as the law, which practically is only a crafty way of pandering to the inherent egoism of the individual. The state, however, itself throws over its own imposed laws when they no longer minister to its egoistic purposes. In short, the state possesses no morality of its own to guide its action, and the oath or pledge which it professes to safeguard is a mere

pretext to be acted on if its interests are served, to enforce when it needs to parade its authority or give tone to its assumptions, but is thrown to the winds when its own interests are threatened. "The state as *abstractum* is the fixed idea of well-meaning but mistaken thinkers, as *concretum* the booty for the caprice of forceful or intriguing individuals, who fill the pages of our history with the record of their deeds. With this concrete state—whose substance Louis XIV. correctly designated as himself—we need not further occupy ourselves; its kernel is bared to us in the Œdipus saga; as the seed of all offences, we recognise the *rulership* of Laius, since for the sake of its undiminished possession he became an unnatural father."

Before sketching the Œdipus myth, it is first necessary to take the measure of that shallow mode of procedure, which undermines the meaning put forward by Wagner by imputing to him what is not involved in his meaning. It is that of forcing on Wagner a glorification of sexual intercourse among relations, repugnant to our thinking. But no such championship arises out of Wagner's condemnation of state rule. There

is, in viewing unconscious nature, a valid mode of judging its instinctive manifestations which leaves undetermined the moral signification of these acts, for the very good reason that the idea of morality cannot exist in man's mind apart from consciousness, and which even—as in the case of *Œdipus* and *Jocasta*—after this consciousness fills with horror those who unwittingly have committed what custom had decreed as immoral, leaves the general question unsettled. The particular case here, however, is one which for us to all intents and purposes, is settled, although on a profounder basis than that usually given; and consequently the mere consideration of the general question, around a particular relationship so offensive to our minds, makes it an easy matter to attribute advocacy to the individual who boldly quotes it. If we have recourse to instances from actual present experience, they at once appear so trivial and ridiculous that serious artistic delineations around such instances of the principle involved only provoke mirth. Discussions on these matters have to be reserved for surroundings like the House of Lords, where all the triviality of dissension is swamped under

the imposing grandeur of advertised nobility. The principle is the same—namely, that the State strains at its gnats and swallows its camels. To the House of Lords we must go to hear of the terrible immorality and iniquity of marriage with a deceased wife's sister. At the same time, certain marriages are carried out under the guidance and approbation of the same assemblage, which by men in less pretentious assemblages are not credited with the virtues our "upper classes" ascribe to them. But then these "upper classes" are the interested parties, and nothing more need be said.

Wagner, however, is concerned to show that the instinctive sexual love is destructive to the quiet of the exclusive circle: there lies in it the spirit of the mutineer, of the revolutionary who departs from the confines of the family to widen its boundaries into the "broad reach of human society." All acts which are productive of good to the race serve to disperse the egoism of exclusiveness. Nature's acts are justifiable from the mere point of view that they help Nature along to her desired end. It is when these acts defeat, instead of assisting, these desired ends that they are unjustifiable. To erect a tribunal

to judge Nature merely because Nature's acts offend custom, which we recognise to be a refuge for egoism, is unjustifiable. It provokes opposition from Nature's instinctive bent, and the tribunal has to give way eventually. The severity of the downfall is in proportion to the obstinacy employed in refusing to recognise necessity in Nature. In this sense Wagner relates the Œdipus myth. We must keep in mind the consciousness of the act of egoism and the consciousness of the act of love. Antigone's acts and those of Brünnhilde both in the *Valkyrie* and at the end of the *Dusk of the Gods*, were conscious acts of love, which break down the effects of the conscious egoistic acts of Laius, Creon, and Wotan. There is, however, still to be considered the instinctive act prompted by love, which becomes obvious as a crime only when it is discovered that certain customs have been outraged. We thus arrive at the kernel of the situation. Laius had ordered his son to be killed because the Pythia had warned him that the child would one day slay him. Herein Laius committed an inhuman act. The first consideration now is, how did society, represented by its state, regard this?

Merely as an act necessitated by the contingency in store if the child had lived. Thus the state has no higher principle than utility: humanity is not considered. Œdipus the son, however, is not killed, and the prophecy of the Pythia came true. Œdipus killed Laius his father in self-defence, unconscious that he was his father. Thus it absolves Œdipus of the guilt of parricide, which would have been charged against him, the individual, by the same state which committed murder with impunity. The question is reduced to the difference between the conscious act of Laius and the unconscious act of Œdipus. Evidently Laius is guilty in a measure which cannot be attributed to Œdipus, who now marries Jocasta, his mother, and has four children—Eteocles, Polynices, Ismena, and Antigone. Nothing is known of any unnatural crime, and nature itself has proclaimed in the children none. A plague struck the land, and the oracle declared that the slayer of Laius be banished. Œdipus becomes aware that he himself was the slayer of his father and the husband of his mother. Horror at the unwonted connection, coupled with the guilt of parricide, compels

Œdipus and Jocasta to pass judgment on themselves; and yet the unhesitating self-condemnation, based on the utmost instinctive loathing, arises from a sense of wrong dictated by mere custom, and not by any inner voice making itself directly known to the senses, apart from the dictates of custom. So far, then, we have to ask why an inhuman act, such as that of Laius, did not arouse public horror or self-condemnation, but was placidly passed over? The answer simply is, that the state committed the one for its own defence, and for that purpose it knows no laws of humanity nor of morality; in the other, custom asked no questions about the promptings of the act of Œdipus and Jocasta, but condemned them immediately, without basing its motive on any deeper reason than the violence done to custom. Œdipus put out his own eyes and disappeared from the scene, leaving his two sons to carry on the rule. They agreed to rule alternately, but at the end of Eteocles' first period he refused to give place to his brother Polynices. The state being incorporated in him, he had no difficulty in breaking his agreement. Therewith war arose, and finally, to end it, the

brothers met and both fell. Creon now assumed the rule, and ordained that the body of Polynices be left to the vultures, since he was the disturber of the peace. Here again we meet with the principle put into practice by the state in our day. Whoever feels that his just demands—*i.e.*, here, his natural demands and wants—call for satisfaction, disturbs the peace, in the modern newspaper language sets class against class, as if they were not already set against each other. It is always the hungry who are to blame for being hungry, and either for rebelling against the position it has pleased God to call them to fill, or refusing to eat cake if they have no bread. Creon's command to leave the body of Polynices unburied signified that his soul was condemned to eternal unrest; but there was one being in whom the feeling of humanity lived. Antigone had followed her blind father out of pity, and now she determined, from similar motives, to bury the body of her brother. What was it prompted her to defy the state's commands and act in full consciousness of her impending punishment? "What, then, was this love, which was not the love of sex, not love

of child to parent, not love of sister for her brother? It was the topmost flower of all. Amid the ruins of love of sex, of parents, of brethren which Society had disowned and the state annulled,—there sprang from the ineradicable seed of all these loves the fullest flower of *pure Human-love.*

"Antigone's love was *fully conscious.* She knew what she was doing, but she also knew that do it she must, that she had no choice but to act according to love's necessity; she knew that she had to listen to this unconscious, strenuous necessity of *self-annihilation in the cause of sympathy*; and in this consciousness of the unconscious she was alike the perfect human being, the embodiment of love in its highest fill and potence. Antigone told the godly citizens of Thebes: 'Ye condemned my father and my mother, because they loved unwittingly; but ye condemned not Laius the witting murderer of his son, and ye sheltered Eteocles his brother's foe: condemn then *me,* who deal from pure human-love alone—so is the measure of your outrage brimmed!' And lo! *the love curse of Antigone* annulled the state! No hand was stirred to save her when she was

led to death. The state-burghers wept and prayed the gods to take away the pain of pity for the wretched maiden; they followed her with words of comfort; and that so it was and that so it must be! that the quiet and order of the state, alack! required humanity to be made a victim! But there, where all love was born, was also born love's avenger. A stripling burned with sudden love for Antigone; to his father he disclosed his plight, and begged that father's love to spare his victim: harshly he was thrust aside. Then the stripling stormed his loved one's grave, that grave which had erst received her living; he found her dead, and with his sword he pierced his loving heart. But this was the son of *Creon*, the son of the state personified. At sight of the dead body of the son, who through love perforce had cursed his father, the ruler became again a father. The sword of his son's love drove a deadly gash into his heart; wounded deep within, *the state* fell crashing to the ground, to become in death a human being."

Those who know the orchestral jubilation in the 2nd Act of the *Valkyrie*, when Brünnhilde announces to Siegmund in the face of Wotan's

decree that he, under her guidance, is to fell Hunding, will better understand the words with which Wagner closes his account of the Œdipus myth, "*O holy Antigone! on thee I cry! Let wave thy banner, that beneath it we destroy and yet redeem!*"

Brünnhilde is the Antigone of the *Ring of the Nibelung*. She acts from a feeling which is not quelled by the consciousness of what she will have to suffer as a punishment from the representative of the state for disobedience. But it is by such acts man's freedom is won. Wagner thus reduces the true mission of the drama to an "*emotionalising of the intellect.*" The effect on the audience must not be attempted by appeals to their reason or by allowing its aim to be consciously uttered by the bearers of its action. We acquire a knowledge of the events of history by experience. But this experience, expounded in histories and treatises, is only an elaborated setting forth of events which in their essence belong to human nature not confined to the past, but equally the motive power of the present making history or of the personages in the myth, who have again taken their ideas from the opposition of physical forces.

At root all is a struggle, which we designate good or bad, according as it appears beneficial or injurious to us. The day and the sun were good, and kept up a continual struggle with the night, which was bad. The seasons divulged the same incessant struggle. We are in the same condition. We judge that to be good which suits our comfort and make a god to match. When anything disturbs that comfort, it is bad. A work of art, however, serves to disclose the essential principle of good and bad, and not that which arises from our ideas of comfort. History only puts the phenomena before us, without ever stepping out of its frame to assume a position capable of turning on itself the eye it sees with. It only decides in favour of shallow, conventional ideas of right and wrong.* Its facts are thus completely disordered, and would soon work their own ruin were it not that the guardian of conventional ideas—namely, the state—hires and pays well the preacher to parade the abstract question before the eyes of the bewildered people. But to the independent mind a preacher in a pulpit is only an object in history, and not an expounder of

* Buckle is a conspicuou exception to this rule.

morals, except in the abstract. We have long listened to this preacher, and are now beginning to observe him instead of listening to him. He observes that he is being observed. Feeling uncomfortable, he to the best of his ability seeks to cover his retreat. The preacher is the Philistine of Philistines. "Hope, faith, and courage can we only gain when we recognise even the modern state-Philistine not merely as a conditioning, but likewise as a conditioned factor of our civilisation; when we search for the conditionments of this phenomena, too, in a conjuncture such as that we have just examined in the case of art. We shall not win hope and nerve until we bend our ear to the heart-beat of history." *

"The soil of history is *man's social nature*; from the individual's need to unite himself with the essence of his species, in order in society to bring his faculties into highest play, arises the whole movement of history. The historic phenomena are the outward manifestations of an inner movement, whose core is the social nature of man. But the prime motor of this nature is the *individual*, who only in the satisfaction of his

* *Opera and Drama*, p. 374.

instinctive longing for love can appease his bent-to-happiness." * He who penetrates to the principle common to all nature will have more actual knowledge of the struggle of life than any one who merely sets himself to record historical facts, —conquests, battles, tournaments, ceremonies and such-like. This principle disclosed by art must appeal to the feelings and not to the understanding. It must not busy itself with a moral any more than does the instinctive course of nature; "its whole moral consists precisely in its justification by the instinctive human feeling. It is a goal to itself † in so far as it has to be vindicated only and precisely by the feeling out of which it springs. . . . However, no action of life stands solitary and apart; it has always some sort of correlation with the actions of other men; through which it is conditioned alike as by the individual feelings of its transactor himself. . . . A great action, one which the most demonstratively and exhaustively displays the nature of man along any one particular line, issues only from the shock of manifold and

* *Opera and Drama*, p. 175.

† Think of Schopenhauer's "Art is always at its goal."

mighty opposites. But for us to be able to rightly judge these opposites themselves, and to fathom their actions by the individual feelings of the transactors, a great action must be represented in a wide circle of relations; for only in such a circle is it to be understood. The poet's chief and especial task will thus consist in this: that at the very outset he shall fix his eye on such a circle, shall completely gauge its compass, shall scrutinise each detail of the relations contained therein, with heed both to its own measure and to its bearing on the main action; this done, that he then shall make the measure of his understanding of these things the measure of their understandableness as a work of art, by drawing in this ample circle towards its central point and thus condensing it into the periphery which gives an understanding of the central hero. This *condensation* is the work proper to the poetising intellect; and this intellect is the centre and the summit of the whole man, who from thence divides himself into the receiver and the imparter." *

Having now taken for the scene of his action

* *Opera and Drama*, pp. 210-11.

a basis which does not permit of its features being dimmed by sectarian or party interest of church and state, and therein having condensed the struggle between the forces of egoism and unselfishness to a central point, Wagner expands the feelings underlying this opposition by music. Therewith the emotions of the audience are appealed to at every step, and the idealism which forms such an inherent factor in man's aspiration is freed from the insidious and successful attempts to ensnare it by a shoddy nobility manufactured out of titles, uniforms, orders and all the makeshifts of conventionalism. A clear glance into that one of the opposing sides wherein the more worthy principle lies is thus gained, and does not correspond with the accepted judgment, but straightway demolishes it. Having seen that the drama must portray the essence of the struggle between two opposing forces in human nature, we understand the gradual victory of the one over the other to be evolutionary. It is always a becoming, never a finished creation. The drama is the highest form of art, because it presents this evolving nature known to us under the form of conflict-

ing interests. Thus what in the separate arts —as in sculpture, where the action is arrested, or in the dance, where the feelings are excluded—is represented as phases of life, must be employed in the drama to another end, and that end is the complete victory of the better principle over the evil, or more correctly such "a perfect correspondence of facts and ideas that the intellectual adaptation of man to his circumstances will be complete," as Mr. Spencer puts it.*

* It may not be altogether out of place to supply one instance of the methods employed by adverse critics on Wagner. Nordau, in a book called *Degeneration*, says of Wagner's theory that the perfect dramatic art impresses the other arts as helps to its end. "Architecture produces an impression without the representation of a drama; the accompaniment of music would add nothing to the beauty and depth of *Faust* and *Hamlet*. Goethe's lyric poetry and the *Divina Commedia* need no landscape painting as a frame and a background. M. Angelo's Moses would hardly produce a deeper impression surrounded by dancers and singers, and the 'Pastoral Symphony' does not require the accompaniment of words in order to exercise its full form." Is it not better to speak out plainly on pitiable nonsense of this kind, to prevent Nordau and others bringing disgrace on themselves? It requires very little reading of Nordau's book to see that he never took the trouble to form even a superficial acquaintance with the writings of the man he so coarsely abuses. Wagner had heard enough to fully anticipate trash of this kind, as any one can see for himself by turning to page 121 of *Opera and Drama*: "He who can only conceive the combination of all the arts into the Art-work—as though one meant, for example, that in a picture-gallery and amidst a row of statues a romance of Goethe's

Action is the order of nature, and only in action can it find its true finished representation. Behind action lie the feelings. Neither feelings nor nature think. It is music which conveys the feeling of the representers of the drama to the seers and hearers. "Music cannot think; but she can materialise thoughts—*i.e.*, she can give forth their emotional contents as no longer merely recollected but made present." Thereby we are led back to the spontaneousness of nature and inspiration, which, according to the optimist, is good. Wagner, in keeping throughout the *Nibelung* drama to optimism, differs from those nondescripts calling themselves Christians, whose basis is the Old Testament, and whose God is the Jewish Jehovah * (certainly a species of optimism but not humanitarian), but who thrust forward the name of Christ when the bewildered mass of

should be read while a symphony of Beethoven's was being played—such a man does rightly insist upon the *severance* of the arts;" and in a footnote on same page, "This is really how certain childish-clever litterateurs conceive what I have denoted the 'united art work' when they think necessary to regard it as a 'chaotic jumbling' of all the arts. Moreover, a Saxon critic sees good to treat my appeal to *Sinnlichkeit* as gross 'sensualism,' whereby he naturally wishes to convey 'the lusts of the belly.' One can only explain the imbecility of these æsthetes by their deliberate mendacity."

* *Opera and Drama*, p. 329.

people begin to question the consistency of their practice with their principles. In honestly going to the root of the matter and keeping strictly to the essence of humanitarian optimism, with nothing to fear from "indiscretions," Wagner presents us with the whole man working himself through the conditions which present obstacles to his development. He looked upon nature as a compromise between two forces, which, when fairly balanced one against the other, produced a state of affairs wherein man's energy found supreme happiness. The highest art was the dramatic representation of the struggle between these forces. Nature developed man; man developed art. Each was an inspiration in itself—the purest expression of a noble energy which must never be dimmed by the consideration that it was unworthy. Christianity as a religion did this, therefore it was rejected; but the humane individual who gave it its name took a place as one of the benefactors of mankind, because he sacrificed himself to proclaim the one Love which law opposes. On the other hand, the Jewish notion of a good god who made a bad world cast a reflection on the goodness of energy in nature and man; and to imply that this

energy arose from some power or deity commanding respect, and at the same time directing this energy to the detriment of those who were so willing to exercise it, was opposed to the harmony and spontaneous giving of Nature. Wagner eventually took a deeper aspect of the Christian doctrine. He never changed his view on the Jewish.

The individual has a struggle with the state. "The Greeks misunderstood the nature of individuality because it disturbed society's moral-wont: to battle against this fate they armed themselves with the political state. Now, *our* Fate is the political state in which the free individuality perceives its destroying Destiny." * We, in our day, have been born, robbed of our individuality, which is crushed by the state. To give this individuality the free play it demands, it must detach itself from the state; "this is as good as to say *annul* the state; for through society has the state marched on to a denial of the free self-determining of the individual. Upon the death of that, has it lived." †

Into this problem now the artistic inspiration of

* *Opera and Drama*, p. 193. † *Ib.* p. 194.

Wagner threw its work; or rather, to give inspiration its due, the work arose out of this problem. Wagner, in his *Communication to my Friends*, shows how the problem grew out of a reversed idea of the apparent moral of *Lohengrin*. To us Lohengrin seems a divine embodiment, who, touching this earthly sphere to rescue a defenceless, wrongly accused maiden, confers a benefit which rightfully calls forth passive obedience to his orders. Elsa, in disobeying Lohengrin, is regarded as bringing down on herself a well merited punishment in losing him who voluntarily changed his divine order for an earthly one. The saddening departure of Lohengrin, coming at the end of a piece bathed in sunshine and brilliancy, in which Ortrud and Telramund seem almost forgotten, weighed heavily on the mind of some of Wagner's friends; and, listening to their criticisms, he allowed himself to consider the possibility of altering the *dénouement*. Wagner, however, kept to the original, and left the true relationship, an earlier undeveloped illustration of that optimistic aspect of human nature, above the need of any deity or semi-deity imposing its conditions. Lohengrin yearns for that human love which is the nature of this world.

He, from an exalted sphere, represents the individual who tries to find satisfaction for his love where that love exists. In bringing himself down from the colder, more exclusive regions, to meet the object of his love, he does not consider himself bound to treat her as an equal. But unless he can give himself unconditionally to what he professes to love, then that love which he has to offer is not that which the beings of this earth require. It partakes of the nature of egoism, of patronage; and Elsa was justified in asking the questions which he forbade her to put to him. Lohengrin's departure was his own punishment. Now, this is just what is wanted to show the supreme value of optimism, of the good inherent in earthly life needing no supernatural assistance.

No optimist has a right to superimpose on the nature he glorifies a being superior to that nature. To imagine a sphere which contains Lohengrins and other divinities who can improve on the conditions of earthly existence is to impute, not an accidental failing remediable by man, but a necessary failing in man, needing prayer and intercession for pity from some superior being, who if he could

possibly remedy the evil must have helped to bring it about: in this sense, a tyrant before whom no self-respecting man would cringe. Wagner kept his optimism within the honest limits of optimism. In the *Ring* man is not evolved out of a mysterious sphere, but he grows up free to overcome a conventional rule which has displaced the instinctive rule of Love. In the *Communication* Wagner expresses this as follows: "This woman, who with clear foreknowledge rushes on her doom for sake of Love's imperative behest,— who, amid the ecstasy of adoration, wills yet to lose her all, if so be she cannot all-embrace her loved one: this woman who in her contact with this Lohengrin, of all men, must founder, and in doing so must shipwreck her beloved too . . . this glorious woman, before whom Lohengrin must vanish for reason that his own specific nature could not understand her,—I found her *now*; and the random shaft that I had shot towards the treasure dreamt but hitherto *unknown*, was my own Lohengrin, whom now I must give up as lost; to track more certainly the footsteps of that *true womanhood* which should one day bring to me and all the world redemption, after manhood's egoism, even in

its noblest form, had shivered into self-crushed dust before her." * This love of Elsa's is again expressed: "The mediator between Power and Freedom, the redeemer without whom Power remains but violence and Freedom but caprice, is therefore *Love*; yet not that revelation from above, imposed on us by precept and command—and therefore never realised—like the Christian's but *that* Love which issues from the Power of true and undistorted human nature; which in its origin is nothing other than the liveliest utterance of this nature, that proclaims itself in pure delight at physical existence, and starting from marital love, strides forward through the love for children, friends and brothers, right on to *love for universal man*." †

Having, it is hoped, clearly demonstrated the undefiled optimism of the *Ring*, we may now turn to the course of the drama, for the conditions as represented which have to be overcome to allow of the ideal man and ideal woman thriving in physical perfection. Furthermore, having rid ourselves of the idea that the *Ring* was written to

* *Communication*, Eng. Trans., vol. i., p. 347.
† *Art and Climate*, Eng. Trans., vol. i., p. 263.

encourage people to study mythology, or that a knowledge of mythology is necessary to throw a light on the bearing of the principle on our life, we must also get rid of the idea, that the sect in which we happen to be born possesses a moral superiority over others. This done, we approach the work with unbiassed feelings.

The *Rhinegold* opens in the depths of the Rhine, where, touched by the sun, the gold reflects light on the beauties of nature, thus affording innocent enjoyment to the daughters of the Rhine without instilling a desire to grasp it for individual purposes of greed. Hither comes Alberich, one of the lower orders, to whom all sensuousness is sensuality—one who has no desires which are not turned to account for individual gratification. Seeing the glittering gold, and the glorious delight afforded to the Rhine daughters by bathing in its rays and singing its praises, he asks what it is. The joy it gives the Rhine daughters, he says, possesses no meaning for him without another quality. This other quality it however does possess, provided he who devotes himself to it curses and shuns the love in which all nature delights. This power is that of gaining mastery

over the world. Alberich broods over the delight he himself will take in coercing others, and having found that it outbalances the other, seizes the gold, proclaims his curse of love, and departs to commence his work of tyranny in compelling his order to slave for him, with the further object in view of extending his mastery over the higher races of life We are now brought into the presence of the noblest aspirant to the attainment of supreme rule, which in itself must not be considered wrong. Wrong consists in the inverting of nature's order, by turning to account its products for egoistic purposes. Wotan and Fricka are presented to us already susceptible to the taint of the corrupt principle, since not only are they bound to themselves by a pledge which precludes the exercise of freedom, but also to the race beneath them. Every pledge demanding fulfilment of its contract necessitates an appeal to further limitations of freedom, in order to tide over the difficulties which are presented when nature asserts itself. Thus Fricka demanded Walhalla to further bind Wotan to her side; Wotan demanded it to ensure safety from his enemies. He thus contracts with the giants for the building

of Walhalla, and therein commits himself to a principle which enforces from the gods the payment of a claim. This payment introduces a trafficking method foreign to their true nature, which should be in accord with Nature, whose dealings with man are purely disinterested and generous. Having thus mortgaged his honour to the giants, he, to fulfil his obligation to them, stoops still lower and identifies himself with the methods of Alberich, the basest order of egoism. Thus, it must be noted that, although Alberich has cursed love and robbed the Rhine of its gold, with the avowed intention of extending his mastery over all races, it is the gods themselves who seek Alberich to rob him of his gold, just as the Church adopted the means of state and usury to further its ends. But the origin of the gradual corruption of the highest order lies in their pledging themselves, and therewith introducing a standard of morality not in accordance with Nature's demands. Fricka is barren, and Nature expends its love on its offspring. Wotan is the highest realisation of Nature, and in satisfying his inherent desire for love can only do this by breaking his pledge to Fricka. The sin does not lie in seeking the object

of his love, but in breaking the pledge; and were this pledge never given, then no sin would have been incurred. Once given, however, then, being unnatural, it drags the higher order from one disgrace to another still baser, till Nature itself revolts at its degradation in the rising of Erda to warn the gods of the impending disaster. The giants have built Walhalla, and come to claim their due. Wotan, however, has promised without being able to accomplish, for it is not his nature to bargain. He must have recourse to the spirit of cunning to find means of fulfilling his obligation. To Loge he trusts to release him from his difficulty. Loge effects this by involving him in consequences which arise from the identifying of himself with Alberich's method. This is the deepest humiliation of authority, which itself demands respect and reverence. Till the just claim of the giants is settled, the gods are left in a predicament which robs them of the indispensable source of their superiority. This is just one of the situations which necessarily grow out of the drama; but because the characters themselves cannot philosophise like abstract thinkers over the profounder aspects of the problem of life, the

superficial listener and reader is impressed with nothing deeper than the outward symbolical reason given. The gods lose their youth because Freia is taken away by the giants as surety for the debt. Freia's apples maintain the youth of the gods; but as she is no longer present to supply them, they consequently grow old. It is not *because* Wotan has promised the giants a payment that he *therefore* has to give her. Certainly he has to part with her, but only in the same sense as society considers that a man, who does not pay his gambling debts, parts with his honour. That honour is restored if a friend settles the account; but it is evident that promises made, before the suspicion of non-fulfilment of the debt arose, would not increase the dishonour. That dishonour is a matter of course, arising out of the conditions. Freia is to the gods what honour is to society. If the latter does not pay, it loses its honour; if the former does not pay, it loses its love, which was embodied in Freia. It is evident the giants have now the upper hand of the gods. At the risk of being wearisome it must be repeated here, that the three grades of life are differentiated on account of the qualities each is capable of exercising.

The dwarfs are pure egoism; they take, but do not give except under compulsion. The giants act on the *quid pro quo* principle; they give and take on hard-and-fast lines as it is contained in the bond. The quality of mercy is not strained with them, because they do not know what it is. The gods are the divine principle which should regulate human affairs, and give with no thought of profit to themselves; their profit is that inherent goodness ascribed to Nature, which blesses him who takes and him who gives.

Loge, returned from his search for recompense for the giants, tells of the gold robbed from the Rhine, out of which Alberich has had a ring fashioned, which brings under his subjection the dwarf race. But the possession of the ring confers the power of gaining mastery over all the world, and the curse of love involved in the original gaining of the ring is now obviated by Alberich's deed. So Loge tells his wondering hearers, who now are set by the ears at this prospect of obtaining power over others. Robbing now is of no consequence. One Church helps itself to another's wealth. *That* is right. God smiles on that deed. But if a democratic state wishes to

take possession of that wealth for obvious reasons of good to the community, that is shameless robbery. So we poor creatures "play such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep."

Wotan and Loge now proceed underground, and by craft secure Alberich and bind him. Wotan demands of him the Nibelungen hoard and the ring. Here Alberich utters his significant warning, equally pointed as that of the giants, when Wotan trifled with their claim:—

> "Give good heed, thou haughty god.
> If I have sinned, I sinned but against myself;
> But against all that was, is, and will be,
> Eternal one, sinnest thou if thou shamelessly steal
> my ring."

Wotan flouts Alberich, and forcibly deprives him of his treasure. While gazing fatuously on it Alberich delivers his curse, and then departs to await the time when he can once more regain the ring. What a picture of the power lost to the Roman Church! It has been critically remarked that there is difficulty in seeing why Alberich should be able to endow a simple ring with all the evil which eventually flows from its possession.

Difficult, indeed! A curse is a wish, and a wish is a prayer. Prayer, Hobbes told us long ago, is "but thanksgiving for blessings in general, and although it precedes the particular thing we ask, yet it is not a cause nor a means of it." The characters in the *Ring* are only called on to express their feelings. The curse lies in devoting the energy of life to the attainment of power by possessing the products of nature, and thus forcing others to labour for that sustenance which their bodies require, in the service of the few. Rome curses heretics, and the Anglican brotherhood is abusive enough to justify the application of the name curse to those who threaten to deprive it of its *acquired* (!) material wealth. Alberich's curse does not invest the ring with any power of evil. The ring symbolises a power which gives to those who devote themselves to the gaining of this power the legal right of withholding and distributing Nature's gifts. It furthermore creates sham gifts, and distributes them to those who lay their energy at the feet of the representatives of conventional authority, and devote themselves to its service. It tortures mentally and bodily those who refuse to worship it, and the severity of its method is

eventually lessened only by the heroism of those who withstand it. That seems curse enough, and is Wagner's view of existence, as well as the opinion of others concerning the principle permeating egoism.

The giants return to restore Freia and receive the Nibelungen hoard as recompense for their labour. Wotan hands over all but the ring, and when on the point of irrevocably degrading authority by refusing it to the giants, the spirit of wisdom arises and warns him against this last act of disgrace. He heeds the warning, and is left profoundly affected by the doom of the gods foretold by Erda. The giants receive the ring, and Freia is redeemed. After Fafner and Fasolt have enacted their family tragedy, Donner clears the air of sulphurous mist. The setting sun lights up resplendently the rugged towers and domes of Walhalla, to which the gods are about to pass over on the rainbow bridge. But Wotan, overcome with one powerful resolve to implant on earth a race which will provide Walhalla with the souls of heroes fit to protect the gods from the disaster foretold by Erda, raises up a sword belonging to the Nibelungen hoard which Fafner the giant had

thrown away with contempt, and holding it aloft, cries,—

> "Thus I greet the castle safe from dread and dismay."

Fricka wishes to know the meaning of the word Walhalla. Wotan answers,—

> "What my spirit has found to o'ermaster fear
> When its triumph is won will give the meaning light."

They then pass over to Walhalla derided by Loge, while from the depths of the Rhine valley the lament of the maidens for the loss of their treasure greets the ears of the gods. With this introduction the three dramas, *The Valkyrie*, *Siegfried*, and *The Dusk of the Gods*, serve to portray the struggle between the two principles which have their common point of departure in Wotan: the egoistic, the nature of the laws enforced and protected by the state, of which Wotan is the head; the unselfish, the nature of the individual loving its like, of which Wotan is the generating source.

"THE VALKYRIE."

The Volsungs are the offspring of the divine principle, and have to fight their way through

a world which has no higher guide than custom—in law called precedent. Siegmund and Sieglinde, the twin children of Wotan's love, are continuously subjected to the hardships and persecution attendant on the pursuit of unselfishness. At an early period the maid was seized by the foe, and forced to become the wife of Hunding, one of the lower race, to whom she, nominally a wife, is virtually a slave. Siegmund, always at conflict with those he meets, his nature impelling him to take the part of the weak and oppressed against the strong and brutal, arrives weary and faint one night at the hut of Hunding. Out of pity Sieglinde provides him with refreshments; both in a world which warred against their ways, their temporarily severed existences are reunited by the sympathy of a look. Hunding returns, and is satisfied that his guest had found the conventional hospitality which redounded to his honour. Spying in his look the "serpent's guile" which glitters alike in the eye of his wife, he questions him as to his origin. Siegmund's recital of his experiences, ending with the account of how he lost even his weapon in trying to rescue a maid from the clutches of her oppressors, at once discloses to Hunding

his enemy; and lamenting that he had not been delivered into his hands, before exacting hospitality for the night, he tells Siegmund to find a weapon for the morning as he must pay to him forfeit for the slain of his race.

Left alone in the night, with no hope of a weapon wherewith to meet Hunding on the morrow, Sieglinde comes to him to point out a sword which had been plunged into the stem of the ash around which the hut was built. At her brutal wedding an old man clad in grey strode into the hall and struck a sword up to the hilt in the stem, telling those present that it would belong to him who could draw it out. This no one had been able to do. Siegmund had remembered how his father once promised him a sword in direst need. Sieglinde also had come to know that his sword was decreed for one of her race, and awaited the day when that friend would arrive who in drawing it from the stem would also free her from the hated bondage of a loveless union. Giving the name Nothung ("need") to the sword, and invoking the need of "holiest love" and "yearning passion," Siegmund triumphantly draws the sword out of its scabbard, and calls on Sieglinde to follow him far

from the dwelling of the foe to the laughing home of spring. Wotan has raised the Valkyries to direct the course of battles on earth and bring the souls of the slain to Walhalla. Hunding seeks vengeance on Siegmund for disturbing the peace of his home; and Brünnhilde, that one of the Valkyries most beloved by Wotan, is deputed to favour Siegmund in the coming fight and fell Hunding. But Wotan has to answer Fricka, who foresees the effect of lawlessness encouraged and aided by the power which itself is bound to protect the obligations and bonds entered into by men. Wotan is helplessly entangled in his own subjection to custom. Free he never could become to act as his better nature prompts him, without his own mode of rule rising up to reproach him. He who had pledged himself to Fricka, he who had bargained with the giants, he who had stooped to pay off his obligations to them by associating himself with the basest acts of fraud and robbery and violence, could not judicially protect the spirit of freedom and love which he had propagated. That worthier spirit could only in its nature prosper apart from and opposed to an authority bound by precedents; and to that the individual Wotan

had committed himself, and the rule of the world which he again could only annul by renunciation. Thrown into the most violent self-reproach at his ignoble bondage, he orders Brünnhilde to sacrifice Siegmund to Hunding. Brünnhilde can only appreciate one side of Wotan's character—namely, that from which she sprang, his desire for the untrammelled exercise of love and sympathy with the nobler instinct in mankind, when she sees it oppressed by the baser. She, however, approaches Siegmund, to foretell him of the fate awaiting him at the hands of Hundung, by the decree of authority. Quickly touched to the heart by Siegmund's devotion to Sieglinde, she frees herself from the duty imposed on her, which she knew did not come from Wotan's heart, and elects to disobey it to lead Siegmund to victory. But authority steps in to defeat one part of her noble resolve, and satisfy Fricka's desire for avenging the insult done to contract and Hunding's hearth. Sieglinde still remains to be protected; so gathering the pieces of Siegmund's sword, splintered in the battle with Hunding, Brünnhilde rushes down, and taking her on horse, rides to the trysting rock of the Valkyries to consider where Sieglinde's safety, and that of the

fruits of love to which she is about to give birth, might be secured. Her sister Valkyries will hear nothing of countenancing her act of disobedience, but she is told of a lonely wood to the eastward, where Fafner has taken the Nibelung hoard to guard it. Sieglinde, listless and indifferent since the fall of Siegmund, has now awakened in her a new devotional joy, when told by Brünnhilde that she bears a Volsung in her womb. Wotan, in the rage of offended authority, is hurrying on the storm to punish Brünnhilde; and Sieglinde, glowing with enthusiasm at the prospect held out to her, alive to nothing else than the safety of the child she has to bear, cries to the Valkyrie to save her. Nearer and nearer approaches the angry Wotan, so Brünnhilde instructs Sieglinde,—

> "Away then swiftly, speed to the east,
> With dauntless heart endure all distress,
> Hunger and thirst, thorns and rough ways;
> Laugh, whether want or suffering waste thee.
> For one thing know, and hold it for ever,—
> The world's most glorious hero,
> Bears, O woman, thy sheltering womb."

Sieglinde pours out her gratitude, and flees, as Wotan arrives to bring Brünnhilde to judgment.

In terror she cowers behind her comrades, but at Wotan's command approaches to receive sentence at the hand of him whom she loves and who loves her, whose heart she knew and whose beloved offspring she sought to protect. Wotan tells her she brought about her own doom, which is banishment from the halls of the gods, to be left asleep at the mercy of the first man who shall awaken her —an Alberich, a Mime, a Hunding, perhaps. Terrified at her fate, the Valkyries intercede for their sister, but Wotan orders them from the rock and threatens with the same fate such as befriend her. They flee in terror, and Brünnhilde recovers from the stupor into which she had been thrown by her humiliation, to plead her cause in declaring she had only carried out what she knew Wotan at heart wished. This may touch the tenderest spot in Wotan, but cannot avert her doom, which is the death of her godly companionship, but the birth of a desire for the glorious human love, which brought Lohengrin down from his sphere to woo Elsa. *Mors janua vitae.* Brünnhilde, banished from godly pomp and glory, in her sleep awaits the awakening kiss of human love from the new-born spirit of man, redeemed by her devotion. At

her entreaty Wotan had acceded to the wish that glowing flames should surround the rocks, so that no craven can approach her. When she is laid to sleep and the fire has burst forth, Wotan departs, leaving her to await the hero who does not know fear.

"SIEGFRIED."

Sieglinde has found her way to the forest, where Mime lurks, at a safe distance from Fafner's retreat, awaiting his chance of possessing himself of the Ring. He knows everything which other people can do, but nothing which he can do himself. He is the wretched human parasite, which makes nature in its youth work so that he can attain his end. It is left to him to bring up and nourish the spirit of love, whose energy, he hopes, is eventually to win for him what serves to gain the mastery of the world. This proceeds in the way known to those who by reading history philosophically and not philosophy historically, see that natural intelligence begins to outstrip the mentor. Then the mentor, from whom Siegfried can only extract knowledge by force, while Nature spontaneously offers it to

him, cajoles and chides in turn the unthankful boy, who instinctively hates him. Producing the broken sword, he tells Siegfried how his mother left but that to him for all the trouble and pains he had given himself to help her at Siegfried's birth. Mime has now to weld this sword for Siegfried, the one legacy from the parent he had never known, but whose image he pictured to himself like that which he had seen in the shining brook. Siegfried gives the pieces to the crafty, boastful Mime, and rushes away into the forest to refresh himself in company with the pure nature with which he felt at one.

Between these extremes of life, one of which eventually must gain the upper hand to the destruction of the other, the conscious representative of a decaying authority whose free will and sympathy prompts him still to help the good, but whose dependence and responsibility enforce neutrality, enters. The avenging god of contract, aware of his inferior station before the one and of his lofty dignity before the other, whose rule had lasted so long that all the instinctive veneration and reverence of conventional man is stirred to express itself,

though we, who await a diviner event, recognise in his renunciation and not in his antiquity a merited respect, sits at the hearth of the despicable manœuvrer of youthful vigour to his own ends. This diverting trio in the scherzo of the drama, being humorously ended by Mime's abject terror at a gigantic shadow, Siegfried returns to demand his sword. This, however, not being forthcoming, he sets to work to weld it himself, while Mime has to sharpen his cunning, of which he now stands more in need than ever. Siegfried, having forged his sword, is now conducted to the lair of the dragon Fafner, who lies dormant in the non-aggressive attitude of commerce, so long as nothing disturbs him nor comes in his way. Commerce can only thrive in peace; churches are useful to it, and it is useful to churches. There is a bargain which has to be carried out; otherwise, commerce is not troubled, except to crush the enemy which will crush it. Swords and revolutions disturb the profits of commerce. Unlike the Church, it will plague no one with either tortures or creed, but when it wants to drink it swallows up what comes in its way. Siegfried has no fear of this enemy

in his path and slays him. He is now in such close touch with nature, that the voice of the bird tells him of the Ring and Tarnhelm which he must possess to win the world. When taking the treasure from Fafner's cave, Alberich and Mime—*i.e.*, absolute greed and greed tempered with the diplomatic spirit—come across each other's path. Alberich lost his power and Mime means to pick it up, therefore they begin to quarrel which has the claim to it. Seeing Alberich's determination to get back all he lost, and enforce his rule without recognising Mime's right, the latter seeks to take what Alberich will leave him; but not a nail does Alberich intend to deliver up—of that which he has not got.*

As Siegfried comes out of the cave with Ring and Tarnhelm, Alberich slinks away, and Mime

* For a typical illustration of this suggestive scene let any one read the Roman Catholic papers on the supreme and sole validity of their orders and the hopeful attitude of the Anglican papers in seeking for a share of this validity; the careful manner, however, in which this claim is put forward, as the lawyers say, "without prejudice if not accepted." When the poor Anglicans get pitiably slighted, how the contempt for the Roman Catholic validity is shown! With such people it is orders, titles, ceremonies, robes, and so forth. Anything to make shift with. In the meantime—?

prepares for the youth's refreshment a poisonous drink. The bird has warned Siegfried of his treachery, and now Mime the blunderer advances, saying to himself,

> "Doubly sly be now the dwarf:
> My craftiest tricks I now must try,
> That I with coaxing, cosening speech,
> May fool the wilful boy."

Labouring under the idea that he conceals his real sentiments, he causes Siegfried by his admissions to deal him his death-blow with the sword, while in the distance is heard Alberich's jeering laugh as this offshoot and time-serving branch of his own particular egoism is swept out of existence with a stroke. The bird tells Siegfried of a mate worthy of him, asleep on a lofty rock surrounded by fire, to be won by the heart which knows no fear. To this rock Siegfried now bends his steps. Wotan, in his last capacity as guardian of traditional authority, comes to bar with his spear Siegfried's passage. First, however, one of these scenes is introduced which bring impressively to our wondering senses the elemental forces behind all our powers of intellect. Wotan calls up Erda, the spirit of

eternal wisdom, and announces to her, more indeed in tones than in words, his will. Then Siegfried approaches to scale the fiery rock, but finds his passage barred by an old man in whose hands is a spear, whose face is half hid by a broad-brimmed hat, who lacks an eye, and to Siegfried is only another standing in his path. He shatters the spear and mounts upward through the flames to reach his bride. With a kiss he awakens the sleeping maiden, and the innocence of love and the devotion of love are united.

"The Dusk of the Gods."

The last of the three dramas proclaiming the inherent goodness of nature, showing its growth and development under circumstances antagonistic to it, but less and less powerful to oppose it, opens with a mysterious glimpse into the spinning of the fate of mankind by the three Norns. Then Siegfried and Brünnhilde, revelling in the buoyancy and healthfulness of human love, take farewell of each other, since Siegfried now departs to seek new fields for deeds of valour. Brünnhilde gives him her horse, Siegfried gives her the fatal Ring—

fatal to them, but now in the hands of her who knew not what falsehood was, and is ready to return it to those who will make of it no means to egoistic ends, when its significance becomes known to her. At the court of Gunther and his sister Gutrune, Hagen, a son of Alberich and Grimhilde—the woman whose favour Alberich had forced by gold, and mother also of Gunther and Gutrune—acts as counsellor. Hagen has persuaded Gunther to take to himself a wife, and Gutrune to herself a husband. He has counselled Brünnhilde as fitting consort for Gunther, and Siegfried for Gutrune. But Brünnhilde is surrounded by flames, and none but the veriest hero can woo her. How also is Siegfried to be made enamoured of Gutrune? There is the magic draught, which will so compel him who drinks it to forget the past and love the first woman he set eyes on, who so chooses that he must love her. This drink typifies with one stroke the necessity which involves Siegfried—unconsciously to him—in the guilt of the world's ways, when he had taken leave of that ideal existence which he can live only in conjunction with Brünnhilde. Having had possession of the fatal

Ring, he must err and expiate the error by his death. With the aid of the Tarnhelm, Siegfried is to personate Gunther, and bring Brünnhilde to him for wife, having previously drunk the magic draught and desired Gutrune for wife. Such is Hagen's plot, which is realised, Siegfried having arrived at Gunther's halls. Blood-brotherhood is sworn, and they depart on the mission. As Brünnhilde awaits the return of Siegfried she is visited by one of the Valkyries, who implores her to restore the Ring to the Rhine and bring about the event willed by Wotan himself—namely, the restoration to the world of the innocence it had known before the gold had become an object of desire. But Brünnhilde only knows the Ring as Siegfried's pledge of love, and spurns the entreaty of the Valkyrie, who departs in dismay at her sister's infatuation. Siegfried, changed to Gunther's shape, now scales the rock, and forcing from Brünnhilde the Ring, compels her to yield to him. He places between them the sword as a pledge of faithfulness. Brünnhilde is now led to Gunther's court to be wed to him, as Siegfried to Gutrune. But seeing the Ring on Siegfried's finger she, before Gunther and

Gutrune, Hagen, and the men and women of Gunther's following, vehemently accuses Siegfried of treachery to her his real wife. Hagen comes forward to venture his spear's point as witness to protect an oath. On it Siegfried swears his faithfulness and innocence, and Brünnhilde hallows its point to Siegfried's death, since he had broken his oaths and sworn falsehood. Hagen, Brünnhilde, and Gunther remain apart from the wedding festivities, to determine on Siegfried's death. Brünnhilde and Gunther call on Wotan to avenge the broken vows. Hagen calls on the fallen Nibelung's father to rule again over his Nibelung host as lord of the mighty Ring.

On a hunting expedition Siegfried wanders from the party to the banks of the Rhine, and suddenly finds himself before three Rhine-daughters, who ask him to give them the ring on his finger, in return for which they will show him where the game he hunts has concealed itself. For a worthless bear, however, the ring seems to him too much reward, and since they mock him for his meanness he will not yield it. They depart, but are called back to take it if it is their wish. But now he is told that a curse of death lies in

its possession. Siegfried was not tempted by their flattery, and will be still less by their threats. He cannot be urged to a deed which has fear to prompt it. The hunting party now rejoin him, and all repose for refreshment. Hagen suggests that Siegfried should relate to them some of his youthful deeds. To this Siegfried assents, and sings of Mime, and of the forest, of the dragon and of the bird. As he draws near to his awakening of Brünnhilde, Hagen restores his memory with a subtle draught. Siegfried recounts to Gunther's and the men's amazement his first visit to the fiery rock. At this point Wotan's news-bearers, the ravens, circle around Siegfried's head, and with Hagen's question—

"Understandest thou too those ravens' speech?"

Siegfried turns on Hagen his back, into which Hagen drives his spear. Borne on the shoulders of the men to the halls, the dead hero is preceded by his slayer, who mockingly calls out that the hunt's booty is being brought home. The grief of Gutrune, and the reproaches which Gunther casts at Hagen for his accursed deed, provoke an answer which boasts of the deed and claims for him

the ring on Siegfried's finger. Gunther spurns him back from what is by inheritance his sister's, but is felled by Hagen, who then rushes forward to seize the ring. The arm of the dead man slowly raises itself in rebuke as Brünnhilde appears in the background, and Hagen in terror restrains himself. Brünnhilde declares herself Siegfried's true bride, and now she fathoms the guilt attached to the possession of the fatal ring. She takes it from the hand of the hero, and having ordered his body to be placed on a pile of logs, to which fire is set, she casts the ring into the Rhine, where it is joyfully received by the Rhine-daughters. Hagen rushes after it, but is borne down to his death in the waters. Brünnhilde mounts her horse and leaps into the flames which are consuming Siegfried's body, while in the heavens the downfall of the godly host and their rule is fulfilled, and the world restored to its state of pure human love by Brünnhilde's sacrifice.

The drama thus portrays the individual struggling against a force which, drawing its sustenance out of this individuality, ought to promote the welfare of all individuals. So long as we limit our conceptions to pure humanitarian

optimism, which forbids the interposition of a supernatural power either to wreck or to restore harmony in existence, Wagner's work is lucidity itself. Optimism is a belief in the goodness of nature as known to our senses and nature's worthiest manifestation is human energy. We can therefore mentally conceive this energy so employed, as to generously adapt individual means to social ends. But the moment we consider individual energies opposed to social harmony, we become vague-minded but practical pessimists, unable to advance any coherent moral argument why we should trouble ourselves to employ our energies. Then, to obviate the difficulty, we grasp at some supernatural power, indulge in abstract speculation and conventional reverence, which in suspending the imperative answer to the obvious uselessness of exercising our energies to an unprofitable and incomprehensible end, permits of two things. Possessing no means of demonstrating the existence of this supernatural power, we invest it with our own egoism, firstly to justify individual acts in ourselves, and secondly to condemn individual acts in others. The power of making valid the justification of these acts is

vested in the state. This forms our pitiable ideas of morality. In practice we are optimists, in theory pessimists. An individual honestly faithful to one or the other view of life alone, cannot associate or have ideas in common with those who use whichever suits the moment. Optimism and pessimism in opposition are both comprehensible. If we believe nature to be evil, then we do not consider sensuousness the mediator between us and perfection; if we believe nature to be good, we need go no further to seek a bond between us and the ultimate aim of life. The evil we know of in the latter case is merely disorder, the egoistic act of taking being allowed to override the unselfish act of giving. Wagner saw that the act of giving in nature, which was disinterested, none the less was returned a thousandfold by the prolificness of nature. Individual capacity allowed of the reciprocal bestowal and exchange of nature's divided whole, but the moment this disinterested reciprocity of nature gave place to self-interested aggressiveness, then the evil was wrought. Supernatural agencies neither brought it about nor could they remedy it.

The idea of pessimism is treated with contempt

by those who make out of Christianity, optimism. That Christianity and pessimism are identical, if once we have thought a little more deeply than the popular meaning of the words suggest, is made clear by Schopenhauer's doctrine. But there is a shallow mode of viewing pessimism not identical with Christianity, and there is furthermore an optimism in close touch with the spirit of Christianity but not of it. To this latter Wagner's work belongs. The *Ring of the Nibelung* is thus a magnificent artistic demonstration of the goodness of nature, dramatically necessitating the opposition of two forces. Wagner's dramatic genius led him to portray fully both aspects of the question; and in order to make place for the optimism of unselfishness, it was necessary to expel consciously the pessimism of egoism. In this conscious act of Wotan and of Brünnhilde, there lay a germ of morality which the spontaneous action of Siegfried did not disclose. Wotan, in renouncing consciously, is a more noble object to us than Siegfried in spontaneously acclaiming. To what could this lead but Christianity? Having in the *Ring* demonstrated the virtue of the renunciation of godly or lordly

pomp and conventional glory, how could the true doctrine of Christianity, made clear to Wagner by Schopenhauer's philosophy, become in his later works invested with any trace of what is opposed to its moral doctrine? Wagner, so far advanced in clearness of thought as to empty his conception of worldly harmony of all conventional makeshifts, was certainly nearer the Christianity of Christ than those who fill their conception of Christianity with those delusive makeshifts. All of this pomp springs from the alloy of egoistic, optimistic Judaism, infesting the unselfish pessimism of Christianity. Now, Wagner's optimism in the *Ring* is not egoistic but altruistic, and therewith possesses more of the elements of Christianity than is possible to any doctrine which has its roots in Jewish law.

Hanslick opines that "he who has not got in his head the entire Northern mythology, with all its heroic and godly sagas, cannot in the least understand Wagner's four-day opera." The present day suffices to procure evidence testifying to Wagner's acuteness in understanding the ways of authority. The following is taken from the *Daily Chronicle* of the week in which

this chapter was written (Dec. 22nd and 23rd, 1896) :—

"The farce of the *congé d'élire* enacted at Canterbury had an appropriate sequel yesterday in St. Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside, when the election was 'confirmed' by a Special Commission, composed of Bishops, appointed by the Queen. Just as the Dean and Chapter of the Metropolitan Church of the Southern Province pretended to elect Dr. Temple to the throne of St. Augustine when they had no option in the matter, so the Archbishop of York and six other Bishops yesterday solemnly sat to invite opposition to the confirmation of the election, and refused to hear an opposer.

"Let us say at once that we have no sympathy with the opposition or the grounds on which it was made. Our sole purpose is to direct public attention to the futility of the procedure involved in the appointment of a Bishop in the Church of England. The ceremony yesterday began with the intoning of the Litany, in which those present prayed to be delivered 'from all blindness of heart, from pride, vain-glory, and *hypocrisy*.' Then the Commissioners had their authority from the Crown read, and signified their willingness to obey the command of their Sovereign Lady. Next was read the royal mandate, citing all opposers, if any, to appear. An opposer did appear. He was not heard; the Commissioners, duly advised by the lawyers, refused to hear him, though previously informed of the opposition. And at length the Apparitor-General paraded up and

down the church crying, 'Oyez, oyez! All ye and sundry who have any objection to the confirmation of the Right Reverend Frederick Temple as Archbishop of Canterbury, *come forward and ye shall be heard.*' Again the opposer applied to be heard, and again he was silenced, the Archbishop of York ruling that the matter was now disposed of. If this is not an elaborate mockery of genuine choice, we are ignorant of the meaning of words. It is, if anything, worse than the farce of the *congé d'élire.* There it was just conceivable that one member of the Chapter of Canterbury might, greatly daring, brave the penalities of *præmunire* by declining to concur in a vote by which a certain individual was nominally elected when he was really autocratically imposed on the assembly. But yesterday, after praying to be delivered from hypocrisy, the Bishops, acting under the Royal Commission and the royal mandate, both solemnly citing objectors and promising that they shall be heard, immediately and as a matter of course refused all hearing. What is all this but an obvious farce? We should say the religious man would call it an impious farce. Certainly it is Erastianism run wild. We know—everybody knows—that the election of a Bishop is a mere form; there is no election. We know that the Commissioner-Bishops have no option but to confirm the person so chosen; and yet they allow themselves to go through the form of holding a court that merely registers a foregone verdict. 'Ye shall be heard' is ead to mean, 'Ye shall not be heard.' Surely Churchmen in general and the Bishops in particular cannot imagine

that this sort of thing can be done without bringing scandal on the name of religion and on their communion, and without raising against them the charge of 'hypocrisy, from which they have just implored Almighty God to deliver them. They have, one and all, at their respective consecrations, prayed that they may duly execute their office to the edifying of the Church; and in the very words of their consecration they are told that 'God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and soberness.' Yet, in the face of all this they do not dare to refuse to perpetrate a mere official gloss at the bidding of the lawyers who have held that when they call upon an objector they must not listen to his objection."

CANON GORE ON DR. TEMPLE'S CONFIRMATION.

"*To the Editor of 'The Daily Chronicle.'*

"SIR,—I was not at all in agreement with you in your view of the *congé d'élire*, for on any occasion when a Prime Minister should nominate any one to a bishopric whose opinions did not fall within the wide limits allowed by the Church of England, the Chapter of the diocese to which he was nominated could by a courageous refusal to elect make the most effective possible form of protest. This is not an improbable event, and the mere knowledge that it may occur does itself no doubt act as a preventive to appointments which would scandalise the conscience of the Church. But I am in agreement with you as regards the Confirmation at St. Mary-le-bow. You will

find, I think, that the feeling on this subject in the Church, both among clergy and laity, will show itself in an unmistakable way. The columns of to-day's *Times* are proof sufficient that it will not be tolerated. But what I want to know, Sir, is whether we may reckon on your cordial support in our attempts to procure a reform in this matter, in our attempts to turn the Confirmation from a farce into a reality? It is quite true that if the Church acquiesces in such a farce it is liable to the charge of hypocrisy; but members of the Liberal party seem to me hitherto to have laid themselves open to a similar charge, when they have called attention to abuses in the Church and refused to co-operate for their removal. I hope, however, that in the future we may witness a change in this respect.—Yours truly,

"CHARLES GORE.

Westminster Abbey, Dec. 23rd."

["Canon Gore's question in the very interesting letter he writes us is a most proper and reasonable one, and so far as we are concerned we have no hesitation in replying in the affirmative. There are some Liberals who think that their attachment to Disestablishment debars them from supporting movements for reform coming from within the Church of England. We are not of that opinion, and never have been. Such movements as those which aim at increasing the self-governing powers of the Church, and especially the powers of the parishioners and the general body of the laity, seem to us to be worthy of all commendation."—Ed. *D. C.*]

If we now add to this the fact that a respected individual and member of the Anglican Church, shortly before, appealed to the head of the Roman Catholic Church for the recognition of Anglican orders, we have thus within the space of three months this proud, aristocratic State Church seeking favours from two antagonists of its own making. The one it deprived of its possessions; the other it has treated with contempt and denied the right to enjoy the privileges it kept to itself. These privileges, in so far as they are material benefits foreign to Christian doctrine, are planks in the platform of a State Church. Now however, when on the one hand it wants to strengthen the "farce" of orders it appeals to the one for help, and when it wants to abolish or reform a similar "farce" it whines that the Liberal spirit has not helped it. Let us now think of Mime, who tried to persuade Alberich to share a power with him which neither of them possessed—for to the honestly intellectual mind "orders" are vain and void—and also tried to train Siegfried into helping him to gain his ends. And the Nonconformist and Liberal organ, unlike Siegfried, falls into the trap and actually proposes to assist the Church.

CHAPTER V.

THE MUSIC.

THE poetical intent of the drama is conveyed by the music at every step of its development, in a sense which Beethoven made conspicuous in the last movement of the "Eroica" symphony. What is there not conveyed to the mind by the andante of this movement, that calm, serene variation on the restless preceding melody, growing from a simple theme "which sets itself before us in sure distinctness, and yet is capable of infinite development from gentlest delicacy to grandest strength"? * Alluding to the *Ring*, Wagner wrote to Roeckel in January, 1854: "In time I hope also to make you acquainted with the composition. For the present only this much: it has entwined itself into one sure whole; the orchestra produces scarcely

* *Prose Works*, vol. iii., p. 224.

a bar which does not develop out of previous motives."

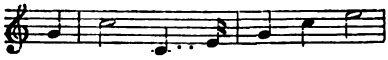
That this inspired capacity to communicate the poetic intent in the music first attains its real power in the *Ring*, and in the works succeeding *Lohengrin*, by no means implies that the music of the earlier works is devoid of the inherent plasticity which, as in the "Eroica" symphony, allows of one and the same melody almost to lose its first emotional expression, in conveying moods of infinite diversity. Elsa's outburst of gratitude and praise for Lohengrin's victory arises from the Lohengrin motive, and the gentle melody which accompanies her appearance on the balcony in the 2nd Act, and in the processional music of the same Act is played in B flat by oboe and clarionet, and again in E by the strings, is the purest feminine reproduction of the same. Let any one substitute, from the second bar of the melody in B flat to the fifth bar, the Lohengrin motive, slowly played, for the music as it stands, and it will at once become apparent how exquisitely the former knightly music now breathes a womanly tenderness and refinement. The manner in which the music of the *Ring* lends

itself to this loving treatment is altogether beyond the power of words to describe. To outward observation, the same notes merely changed in rhythm and measure, or transferred with the same rhythm in part to different notes of the scale, is a mechanical device denoting a certain amount of ingenuity. It might be remarked that any one with a mind could do it, like the poet who could have written Shakespeare if he had had the mind. But it is not every one who can let his music and his dramatic aim so spring from the heart, that we come under the magic spell of its unity, that we feel that its poetry is not the result of ingenuity, but of that unenforced harmony of inspiration, which Wagner believed was the life-spring of all nature's products. As far as the mere notes are concerned in Wagner's different works, what is practically the same melody is often repeated without the listener being aware of it. The reason of this is not far to seek. The poetic intent which is being divulged in each case is different, and the impression conveyed to the hearer is not that which absolute music conveys, but the distinct feelings of an embodiment on the stage before us. Thus, when we hear in the *Meistersinger* motives

from the *Ring* or *Tristan*, they affect us differently, not having their root in the profounder emotions underlying these two—in the main—deeper works. For instance, in *Tristan* there is one bar of music, that strain which accompanies Isolde's death, first making its appearance in quick tempo in the introduction to the 2nd Act, and assuming on p. 137 of the piano score a form almost exactly reproduced in the quintet of the *Meistersinger*, twice repeated by the soprano and orchestra, the second time leading off from a trill on the words "*Meister vollen Kreis.*" Who recognises this? Again the Meistersinger motive is, at root, one and the same melody which makes up the Inheritance and the Sword motives of the *Ring*. At times in the 3rd Act of the *Meistersinger* one bar is identical with the Walhalla motive, while Walter's knightly motive is merely that of Walhalla transformed into youthful light-heartedness, akin to the "Weia, Waga, Woge du Welle" of Woglinde in the *Rhinegold*. What, then, is the poetical idea at the root of one and all of these themes, which has its most majestic expression in the Walhalla theme, its most elemental substance in the Sword motive, its most comprehensive sweep in the Inheritance

motive, its affected pomposity in the Meistersinger motive, its youthful light-heartedness in Walter's motive, and its empty irresponsiveness in the Ring motive? It is power or authority in its varying moods. Indeed, all these may be traced back to the Lohengrin motive. The inner resemblance strikes us through the ear first of all. The outer mechanical resemblance is recognisable in the similarity of the rhythm, and in the common root in the dominant and rise to the mediant. From a plain and elemental but pregnant motive, such as that of the Sword in the *Rhinegold*, we can arrive by a series of variants to the majestic and eloquent Walhalla theme, and thence to an intensified condensation in three notes of the essential rhythm. For clearness they are all given in the key of C.

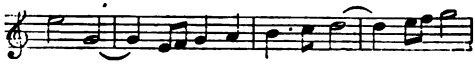
(1) Sword motive.



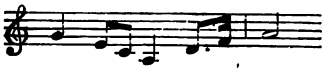
(2) Volsung.

(3) Meistersinger.

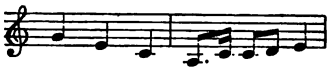
(4) Inheritance.



(5) Motive from Meistersinger.



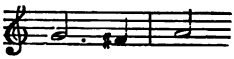
(6) Walhalla.



(7) Motive from Valkyrie.

(8) Sieglinde.

(9) Death or fate.



From the Sword motive (1) to the phase of the Volsung (2), as sung by Mime in the scene with Wotan in *Siegfried* and thence to the Meistersinger (3), and Inheritance motives (4), are but short steps. The particular melody (5) in the bars associated with the Nuremberg motive appears with a striking family likeness to the Walhalla theme, especially at the end of the scene in the third act between Sachs and Walter, in the bar following Sachs' last words, "Drum kommt, seid ihr mir gleich gewillt." This motive is closely connected with Walter's knightly motive, and the change thence to the Walhalla motive (6) does not call for any change in the first four notes, while

the rhythm in every case is maintained. If then we take the 'cello solo (7) in the first act of the *Valkyrie*, as Siegmund receives the water from the hands of Sieglinde, we get the rhythm of Walhalla complete, but the melody contracted; a further abridgment of this to the so-called Sieglinde motive (8); and lastly the Death or Fate motive (9), which, first appearing as Brünnhilde, comes to warn Siegmund of his death, contains in the smaller space and the fewest possible notes the essential descending and ascending properties of the Walhalla theme. It is the poetical idea, which by hearing of the entire works must become clear. All of these melodies spring from a like feeling. Wherein the structure and features possess similarity is the superficial aspect of the matter. The wealth of suggestion inherent in the smallest of these motives can only be known to those who have entered into the poetical aim of the work, and are able to view these motives in the same sense as the figures on stained glass windows become distinct from within the cathedral. Let us take what is apparently the simplest of these, the last, called the motive of death, as it appears in the piano score.

Here we have two chords and a connecting note. What can that small fact convey to people who have never heard the *Ring*, when we know that many who do hear it, otherwise not dead to the influences of poetry or music, are incapable of entering into the sublime poetry of the *Ring*, and judge it from their incapacity? That this motive is the actual kernel of the Walhalla and the Volsung motive, has been already suggested. It has also been suggested that Brünnhilde's sleep is the death of the old, leading to the life of the new. Thus we can understand this motive as the *mors janua vitæ*. To investigate the poetical execution of this idea, we must keep ourselves in sight of the predominant dramatic aim, and this has been shown to consist in a twofold struggle emanating from the desires of Wotan—one the desire to rule worthily, and the other to exercise and give vent to his feelings of love, which is the order of nature. This raises a conflict, since both cannot be exercised without the one destroying the other; and the incapacity resulting is made obvious to

him by his natural desire for love, which compelled him to offend against those laws instituted by himself. He had pledged himself to Fricka and to the giants, and guiltily tried to redeem the latter of these pledges by the base act of robbery and coercion, entirely foreign to that order of nature which prompts him, as it does every other being, to love and propagate his like by love. Seeing his incapacity, he determines to renounce all participation in a rule which compels him to the base act of sacrificing his offspring, the loving fruits of that lawlessness which barren Fricka condemns; an offspring, however, which alone possesses the quality harmonising with the order of nature, whose one law is love and whose potency is productiveness. The sin in the world, symbolised by the Ring, is the utilising of Nature's products to selfish ends, thus destroying the source of its healthy fertility; but when this symbol comes into the hands of the offspring of Wotan's free and pure love, who have never been bound as Wotan, to his shame, has been bound, who at every step have fought and conquered those who would rule under the laws of coercion and hate, then it loses its power of

ministering to selfish ends, since the nature of those who now hold it is unselfish. But they are doomed to expiate their innocently guilty possession of the *Ring* by their lives; at the same time, however, when consciously aware of its guilt, they are ready and willing to return it whence it was stolen, and thus once again restore to the world its condition of pure love.

This being the poetical idea which animates the music from beginning to end, it is not necessary for the present purpose to consider the purely optimistic side of the drama. At one time Wotan had not entered into the drama. Neither was the optimistic import consciously and with intent impaired by his introduction and renunciation. Wagner admits himself that the artist stands opposite his own art work, provided with a problem which he has, equally with others, to solve. A true dramatist does not in his drama occupy himself with problems; he sets them for solution, which means that the nature of the work contains more than the understanding of the individual. It is the understanding of the community, or of nature itself. It was the study of Schopenhauer which disclosed to Wagner that the

conscious act of Wotan accorded with morality in the actions of men, and not the instinctive act of Siegfried. The first makes the attainment of a moral signification of life possible, the latter provides it with no foothold for morality.

We can therefore, for our purpose, divide the music into two parts, and occupy ourselves with but one of these parts. The greater part pervades the whole drama, from the introduction to the *Rhinegold* to the last motive sounded by the orchestra in the *Dusk of the Gods.* The other commences with Siegfried, and is conspicuous by its almost entire absence during Brünnhilde's closing monody. The chief source of the motives peculiar to *Siegfried* and the *Dusk of the Gods* is found in the Horn motive of Siegfried, which does not adapt itself readily to any of the motives already provided in the *Rhinegold* and *Valkyrie.* Albert Heintz finds room for its subsequent introduction in the cadence of the Sword motive, which in the earlier drama, the *Valkyrie*, discloses the Volsungs' distress theme; but even in this case there is obviously no development of the Horn motive. Wolzogen connects it in some way with the first rhythm of the ride of the Valkyries,

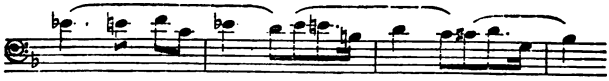
and an inversion of the first notes of Siegfried's heroic Volsung's theme.

However, the musically expressed bond between Siegfried and his parents, and again their bond of union with Wotan, can only be justified by poetically derived parallels or relatively similar situations, where the two conflicting forces come into play, and enough of these are provided to dispense with every attempt to connect arbitrarily Siegfried's youthful energy and his special heroic development with previous motives of the Volsungs. Siegfried has in himself something new, which he apparently owes to conditions, and not to individuals. Certainly that which connects Siegfried with his parents and Wotan is his freedom, but that side of it only which labours under the fatal influence of the established order, not the ideally free. Thus we can only connect Siegfried and his parents with the distinct themes of the Volsungs, and they all lead back to the Sword motive. Our object is solely to discover the golden thread running throughout the work, developing itself from and adapting itself to the situations, as the dramatic intent throws light on it and receives light from it.

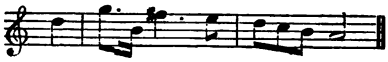
The conflict of opposing forces finds its battlefield in Wotan's breast, but even he is subject to, and not master of, the predominant law of nature which is embodied in Freia, the goddess of Love. Thus the earliest contention between Wotan and Fricka arises from the threatened loss of Freia. This is at once expressed by a motive dividing itself into two parts, which, in one form or the other, keeps a close grasp on the drama, just as the idea of love is the pervading element throughout it. Immediately with Freia's entrance the motive appears.

Its second part, in diversified forms, is probably more frequently in use than any other motive of the *Ring*. In its hurried form it seems to depict the distress of love when threatened by the spirit of egoism. Annotators give it the name of the Flight, the Distress of the Volsungs motive; and as long as the fact is not lost sight of that the Volsungs are the children of love and Wotan their father, that their spirit is that which established authority persecutes, the name is

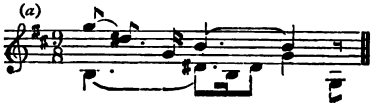
justifiable. It also expresses the loves of the twin Volsungs, Siegmund and Sieglinde, and in this drawn-out form makes up the Love motive in the first Act of the *Valkyrie* and many vocal and orchestral passages in the work.



It also forms the motive of love greeting between Siegfried and Brünnhilde in the third Act of *Siegfried.*



Since the *Valkyries* are the champions of the spirit of love, it is quite in keeping with its origin that it forms their vigorous call *ho-jo-to-ho.*



It is sung first by Fasolt (Piano Score, p. 69) in the *Rhinegold* to the words "das wonnig und mild bei uns armen" (who winsome and sweet with us might dwell), introduced by the first ascending bar of the motive which twice already in the orchestra has served to disclose poetically

the tenderer sentiments of Fasolt and his appreciation of the worth of woman. The incapacity to see the beauty of Wagner must lie in the passing over of these exquisite poetical moments. In this case we have a melody first introduced as Freia enters. It only strikes the ear at this point as a motive expressing a particular action on the stage. As the giant Fasolt is asked by Wotan to name the reward for the building of the castle, he points out that the reward is none other than the giants deemed fitting—"Freia the beautiful, Holda the free" is to be taken away by them. At the word Freia (Piano Score, p. 65, line 2), the ascending motive reflects in the concrete the tenderer feeling in Fasolt's breast, and in the abstract the beauty connected with the idea of love, both together "materialise the emotion." This is done, however, with such refinement, here indeed little more than a passing breath of "the sweet south that breathes upon a bank of violets stealing and giving odour," that it is not surprising if ordinary opera-goers, presented with an indifferent performance and inability on the part of combined singers, actors, and orchestra to give it its

due expression, fail to appreciate the budding poetical expression. As a matter of fact, in the towns where the *Rhinegold* is played, the fault does not lie so much in the performance as in the audience. In England, where it is never given, an understanding of the whole drama is impossible. Were it but once possible to produce the entire *Ring of the Nibelung* before an English audience composed of people who sincerely want to hear the work in fitting peace and quiet, severed from the habits prevalent in the whited sepulchres of fashion, performed by actors who are also singers, and who neither want to air their individuality over the footlights nor are applauded for so doing, conducted by a musician who is in complete sympathy with the work, organised by a director who has no intention of subordinating the work to the customs of fashionable opera-goers, enough would be conveyed at a first hearing to such an audience to rivet their interest on the development of the poetical intent. The common people have always heard Wagner gladly. Had Wagner collected into an eight-bar melody all the beautiful passages of this motive, and had it been sung over

the footlights directly to the stalls and boxes by some flattered favourite of society, it would have made some effect, or the singers would have made an effect—which is what society craves for. But no: Wagner had a drama to write, and one of the necessities of dramatic work is development. Consequently the first delicate moulding of Freia's love—nature, portraying the desire in Fasolt's heart—is left to impress itself unostentatiously on the hearer, to find its own way to his heart. But this is not in keeping with the ostentation of an operatic audience or the customs of the patrons of the stage, and therefore it loses its effect through its very truthfulness. When Fasolt feels that Wotan is mocking at the tenderness of a giant's feelings, he exclaims (Piano Score, p. 68, line 4): "Hohnst du uns? Ha wie unrecht! Die ihr Schönheit herrscht" ("Mockest thou? Ha! how unjust! Ye who by beauty reign"); the grace of the motive makes itself heard in the orchestra, interrupted by Fasolt's allusion to the stronghold built by the hands of the giants, and then, with the sweetest poetry, melting into an expression of his desire that a woman should impart her grace

and beauty to their hearth. Another instance of the use of these combined motives is to be found at the end of the *Rhinegold*, where Freia is being shut out from view by the piled-up Nibelung hoard and the gods are writhing in shame and humiliation (Piano Score, p. 180, line 2).

"Tief in die Brust brennt mir die Schmach" ("deep in my heart burns the disgrace"), sings Wotan; and Fricka, "See how in shame dishonoured the goddess stands!" The wealth of melody in Wagner gives a new form to the motive. To the eye it is much the same, to the ear quite new. It is, however, in the *Valkyrie*, where Brünnhilde warns Siegmund of his death, that this motive attains its most beautiful expression. Siegmund is questioning her about Walhalla, about Wotan, about Volse, and whether women will be found where he must go. Each question receives its poetical treatment musically, in accordance with its sentiment; the gorgeous glories of a life in Walhalla seem to be momentarily unveiled, in much the same way as we fancy children are attracted in reading fairy tales of princes and princesses, castles and treasures. When Siegmund asks, "Grüsst mir in Walhalla

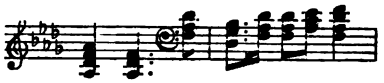
froh eine Frau?" ("will a woman greet me in Walhalla?") Brünnhilde answers, "Wunschmädchen walhen dort hehr" ("wish-maidens serve there"); the idea of woman connects itself with the idea of love, and love with its embodiment in the *Rhinegold.* People must have ears and hearts for this. The beauty is expressed in the theatre by action and orchestra, and cannot be shown here on paper. Those who are more or less susceptible to such passages in Wagner are those who are enthusiastic about him. Those who are not make their incapacity stand for a test. Contradiction they cannot bear, since it implies a failing in them. When Brünnhilde has informed Siegmund that Sieglinde cannot accompany him to Walhalla, he tells her to greet Volse and all heroes, also the beautiful wish-maidens. Again the Freia motive graces the allusion to woman, as if Siegmund were acknowledging with deference Brünnhilde's testimony to the alluring compensations of Walhalla, but there cannot be anything to compensate him for the loss of what he loves. Music thus brings to us the poetry of life as no other art can, and it is of such instances that Wagner's works are made up. The ascending first bar of the motive occurs

often throughout the drama, the second builds up orchestral passages. It is prominent as Wotan and Loge descend to Alberich's underground abode to secure the Ring. It governs the love music of the first act of the *Valkyrie*, and leads, as the Flight movement, into the introduction to the second Act, where it gradually takes shape as the *Valkyrie* call. It also forms the basis of Fricka's lament over Wotan's faithlessness. Again we hear it when Brünnhilde has proclaimed to Siegmund that she will protect him in his combat with Hunding. Both forms of the motive make up the unison passage for violins when Siegfried has scaled the rock and reached Brünnhilde's retreat. In every case where it occurs we find it expressing that which Freia in the *Rhinegold* embodies, and which the gods need to sustain them in power. Translated into practical modern requirements, it asserts that the rulers of man have to be imbued with the spirit of love and not of coercion.

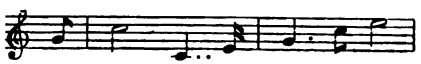
It is also necessary to consider how the whole drama of Wotan is enclosed in the ascending motive of which the introduction to the *Rhinegold* is composed, and the descending motive of the end of the gods. The first rises through an octave

to the mediant, to which note the characteristic themes of the Volsungs ascend; or if this is not exactly reproduced, an agreement in rhythm is always present. The latter descends from the dominant on the Lydian scale. Between these motives, when the one follows the other, as in the orchestral introduction to the third Act of *Siegfried*, or as Brünnhilde steps forward in the last scene of the *Dusk of the Gods*, there is a modulation which allows of a characteristic motive for the Wanderer, thus poetically assigning to him a position between the ascending motive of Life and the descending motive of Doom. Wotan's rule passes away, but he represents the intelligence of the age, at heart favourable to the advent of the new order, which actually is the order of nature. We have to find in Wotan the source both of the old and the new, and this is provided in the Walhalla and Sword motives.

Walhalla Motive.



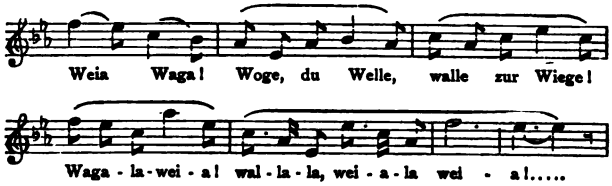
Sword Motive.



What grows out of them poetically illustrates the two aspects of power opposing each other in

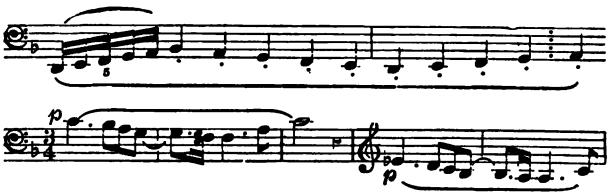
the world, the one unnatural, coercive, grandiose, the other natural, congenial, disillusioned. The Walhalla motive is presented in its complete and finished form. What it represents cannot gain in greater accessions to its majesty. In this world the rule of pomp has drawn around it all the reverence and veneration it can ever obtain, and that finds its sublimest and most majestic expression in the Walhalla motive. Thus it can only reappear in modifications, partaking in treatment less of its ideal glory. The other, the Sword motive, is presented in a bare outline, to be imbued with ever richer evidences of its signification, as the spirit which is embodied in the Volsungs grows to maturity, and is freed from the restraints of bondage. Since this imbuement of the Sword motive, otherwise the idea which Wotan has grasped to protect authority from succumbing to the sordid influences of egoism, with the spirit which must possess the rule of the future, really makes up the essence of the poetical idea, it will be advantageous to consider first of all the Walhalla motive in its mode of employment throughout the drama. When, at the beginning and again

at the end of the *Rhinegold*, Wotan addresses his invocations to Walhalla, the castle is regarded as a stronghold and refuge wherefrom to continue that rule of which Wotan is the representative. Therefore it is clear nothing can add to the majesty of the idea which is, at its first presentation, expressed in its music. The Walhalla theme takes many forms, but none of them increase the glory of the main theme. The opening melody of the Rhine-daughters has its basis in the Walhalla motive, expressing in this



form the artlessness of untainted responsibility—that is, the caretaking of these natural charms which furnish nourishment to gratify innocent sensuous desire. After the robbing of the gold, as far as the song of the Rhine-daughters is concerned, this melody is, throughout the drama, replaced by their lament, but appears again at the end of the *Dusk of the Gods*, when the gold is returned to them. Another contracted form

of the Walhalla motive (already quoted as No. 7 on p. 237) appears in the *Valkyrie.* The divine nature of the gods lies solely in their capacity for exercising unselfishness, and therefore not only is the Freia motive employed in expressing Siegmund's and Sieglinde's feelings, but at the very outset, when Siegmund appears at the door, a motive which springs directly from the Storm



motive makes its appearance. In the stormy prelude it seems to depict an object in the storm; and when, as that object gains the shelter of the hut, it assumes a more collected form, its relationship to the Walhalla motive becomes obvious. As the love of the Volsungs waxes, it is poetically clear why these motives, springing from Freia and Wotan, should lose their storm and stress and assume the serene tranquillity of mutual love. Apart, Siegmund and Sieglinde are persecuted units, unhappy in a world ruled by a system not in accord with their nature;

together, the beauty of their nature arises like the florescence of spring. The dramatic character of all this music is obvious, since, by the conjunction of components, inquietude is soothed and opposition dispelled, alike in characters and music. Otherwise, in its original form, or such parts of it as suggest the glory of godly rule, the Walhalla motive represents that which in its noblest sense we venerate as something superior to us, something transcendent, abused under the name of god. It is that ideal sphere in which our idols live, made by us to countenance our own unholy desire to subject our fellow-creatures to a rule which serves individual egoism.

The course of the drama teems with impressive instances of the majestic rule of Walhalla. A few may be noted. At the end of the *Rhinegold*, after Donner has cleared the air of sulphurous mists, and the stronghold is seen, radiant in the light of the setting sun, the motive appears with such solemnity and calmness that, presented in a noble stage picture, where Walhalla suggests a structural form given to those domelike masses of cloud we see in the sky, a sublime sense of the transcendent glory of dominion is impressed

on us. The air seems to be relieved of an oppressive closeness, everything sparkles in delight like a million dewdrops in the sunshine; and behind all, the picture of Walhalla for eye and ear. Nothing contributes to the effect more than the apparently simple art with which Wotan's voice enters, and the great theme seems to become imbued with a still more radiant lustre.

"Abendlich strahlt der Sonne Auge
In prächtiges Gluth prangt glänzend der Burg."

("With evening rays the sun's eye streams;
In their radiant glow, sparkling, the castle stands.")

Where others have imposed on the feelings the inner poetical intent of a poem by language alone, Wagner does so in music, with the incomparable power of communication, of which it alone permits. Again, in the *Valkyrie*, when Brünnhilde warns Siegmund of his death, the Walhalla motive is employed with the subdued air of all true poetry. Everywhere, in fact, this music renders itself eloquent by its latent power; it seems never to utter completely all that its wealth suggests or could reveal. This, doubtless,

is a condition of all true poetry. In *Siegfried*, when Wotan gives answer to Mime's question, "Which race dwells on the cloudy heights?" we have the Walhalla and the leading motives of the rule arising from this, to ignorant minds, awe-inspiring system, of which the end is willed by its supreme head.

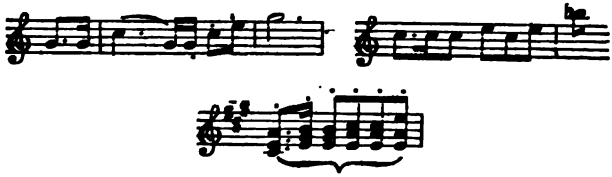
"On the cloudy heights dwell the gods,
Walhalla their seat is named;
Light spirits are they. Light Alberich
Wotan rules their band.
From the hallowed boughs of the world-ash tree
He shaped for himself a shaft—
The stem may fade but the spear ne'er fails—
And with its point Wotan restrains the world.
Truthful runes of holy treaties
Into the shaft he cut:
The rule of the world is held in the hand
That wields the spear, now firm in Wotan's grasp,
For aye they all obey the mighty lord of the spear."

There was but one power which refused to obey "the mighty lord of the spear"—that is, the power forming the nature of the Volsungs, the power to which Wotan himself was subject. There is another form of the Walhalla motive, as unrealisable as that of the aspiration to rule

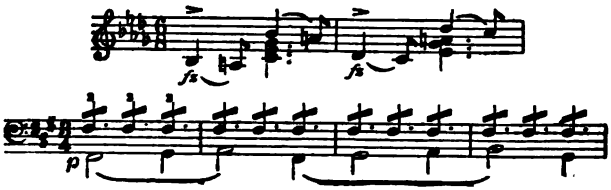
worthily by means of coercion, but equally sought after by man—in short, part and parcel of coercive rule. That is the power of gold. The Ring motive possesses all the rhythm of the Walhalla

motive. It is, however, devoid of majesty. It is empty, dispiriting, and unworthy. The Walhalla motive, which must always be regarded as transcendent, never realisable—in short, an ideally egoistic aim of the few—has its ignoble counterpart in the Ring motive. The latter is the negative quantity morally considered, the positive quantity immorally considered, and appears like a hyphen joining the various motives which are associated with the unworthy attempts of egoism to overwhelm the goodness of nature. Since the motives of the Nibelungs and the giants are also phases of power, detached, as it were, from that of Walhalla, and losing everything but a scrap of rhythmic resemblance, the depicture of the threatened victory of the base instincts of egoism and bondage is accomplished with certain themes which are also associated with higher aims and instincts. Thus the fanfare depicting the brilliancy of the

gold has its counterpart in Alberich's threat, and his shout of triumph in a portion of the Walhalla



motive. These are employed chiefly with other motives—namely, that of Bondage, and that of



the Dragon—and make up terribly impressive tone pictures of the forces of hatred and coercion. We will not further concern ourselves with these and the other motives, as this is not a guide through the themes of the *Ring*, but an exposition of how Wagner has carried out consistently his poetical idea, which agrees with the view of life he expressed wherever he gave utterance to it. It must be said that the drama cannot be thoroughly explained without attention being drawn to the music representing Wotan's mental conflict after

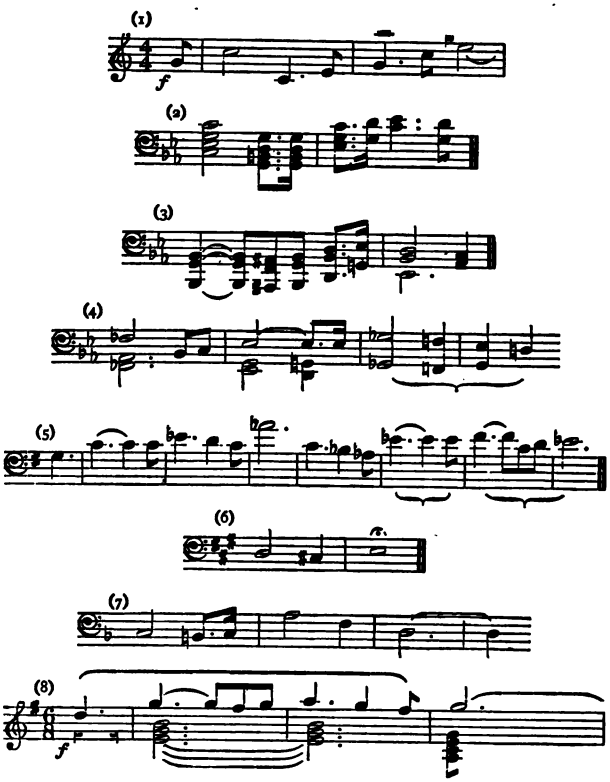
Fricka has compelled him to sever himself from his offspring. Godly despair and rage are powerfully disclosed to us. This, however, and much more indeed, does not enter into our direct line.

We have seen that the Walhalla motive signifies the ideal authority which man in various forms has conceived, and a few have tried to realise, but which experience always tells us is bound up with coercion, bluster, the use of high-sounding names, implied virtues, and the ruthless trampling under foot of that spirit which ministers to the people's welfare. We must now turn our attention to the propagation and evolution of this spirit, and its final victory in leaving an inheritance to man even though the peaceful and devoted bearers of its religion have to suffer death. The first intimation is given when Wotan, before passing over to Walhalla, picks up the sword contemptuously rejected by Fafner and utters the words—

> "Thus I greet the castle
> Safe from dread and dismay."

The Sword motive has in the orchestra immediately preceded these words.

It formally contains all the motives of the Volsungs, and they are collected into one orchestral setting after Siegfried's death—usually called a death march, but equally entitled to the name of life's victory, since it, from the sorrowful portrayal of the fate attendant on the spirit of love, fights its way through these conditions to ever more and more triumphal independence, till with the heroic motive of Siegfried's manly youth developed from the merry Horn motive, the manhood of his own nature conquers all. The history of these motives is the history of victory. They will be followed here not in the order in which they appear in the march, but as their employment for exposition of the poetical aim in the drama demands. Although the birth of the poetic idea dates from the Sword motive, it itself really has its source in the ascending motive forming the introduction to the Rhine-gold. This has its accents on the notes of the common chord, and rises through an octave to the mediant. In the great worked-out crescendo of the introduction it extends from the pedal note through six octaves. Those motives are eight in number.



(1) The Sword motive, (2, 3, 4) the Volsungs in three forms, (5) the Volsung motive of Siegfried, (6) the Death motive, and (7 and 8) the so-called Sieglinde motive in two forms, the second form only appearing twice in the drama and not in the

march. These themes are worked into one symphonic whole in the march, and united by two figures which it is not necessary to consider. The first form of the so-called Sieglinde motive (No. 7), with the Death motive, is the essence or heart of the poetical idea. The outward characteristic found in all these themes is seen in its most condensed form in these two. Their inner significance can only be appreciated by a knowledge of the work and the recognition of the poetical idea.

The Sword motive then implies that Wotan is possessed of an idea whereby the gods may be made secure against the attacks of the baser passions threatening their existence. This motive accompanies all allusions to the weapon of defence which Wotan means his offspring to acquire when standing most in danger or reduced to the direst straits. It appears first when Sieglinde attempts to direct Siegmund's attention to the hilt protruding from the ash stem. The motive lends itself in Wagner's hands to wonderful effects of harmony, but cannot be considered a melody till the thematic music of the Volsungs grows out of it. It takes the form of distinct melody in the minor as a definite indication of the sad treatment

meted out by law founded on custom to the independent unselfish spirit in man. Thus, when Siegmund has recited his experiences to Hunding and Sieglinde, he ends by sorrowfully addressing an answer to the question of the latter why his name cannot be associated with the idea of peace.

The orchestra sadly comments on this by producing the three themes of the Volsungs, the last of which already formed the melody of Siegmund's declaration. Infinitely sad sounds this music: a heartfelt wail for the persecution of man's noblest trait, his devotion to disinterested pursuits, by that authority which should have but one duty—namely, to safeguard and exercise it. Among the many repetitions of these themes, notice may be drawn to the scene where Wotan questions Mime concerning the race which he must treat harshly and yet love above all. The one load on Mime's mind is to give the proper answer and save his head; thus, while Wotan has put the question with all the mournfulness of the original music, Mime answers in staccato major with the callousness of his nature. The great motive of Siegfried the Volsung appears first as Brünnhilde tells Sieglinde that she bears in her womb the greatest hero of

the world, he who we know is able to avert the machinations of Mime, to secure, unconscious of its guilt, the symbol of unworthy gain, and to break the spear of Wotan, on which were cut in runes the obligations of contract. The repetition of these themes of the Volsungs is bound up with the delineation of the characters of Siegmund and Siegfried. The divine nature of the feelings embodied in them and in Sieglinde is expressed in the two motives which appear to be the heart of the musical conception. It is noteworthy how often Wagner's music gains in intensity the more the motives condense, thus rapidly depicting the dramatic situation instead of dwelling on it. For, just as Wagner presents in the *Rhinegold* the Walhalla theme in its most complete and majestic form, extending through twenty bars, its dramatic significance is successfully effected by the merest reminiscence. The same capacity for condensation occurs with the motives of the Volsungs. In all of them there is a common phrase. The Volsungs are the bearers of the divine nature, the essence of their music, condensed into the fewest notes, can expand into new melodies conveying to the feelings the dramatic import and poetical aim.

The two characteristics of the Volsungs are the sadness of their fate in this world, and the heroism and beauty of their unselfish devotion. This first is the subjective, the second is the objective aspect. Death in anguish, violence, and persecution, is the fate of the individuals struggling to free themselves and others from the bonds of convention. When the truth—namely, that this actually forms the order of life—is brought home to the official individual, by the fact that he, in assisting to condemn and persecute, must also strike his own children, the terribly tragic and cursed nature of authority comes home to him and brings about his downfall.

In actual life we discern little of this. Wealth, flattery, and all of that which the egoistic mind loves, is bound up with the position of those who inherit or acquire authority; and the children of the "noble," or the aspirants to like fame, accommodate themselves to the customs which so easily provide them with religion and honour and demand neither sacrifice nor independence. If a case did occur, the father would consider it his duty to strike down the rebellious offspring and maintain the dignity of the law. He would

be consoled by society and rewarded with some further gew-gaw; he would ask people to remember him in their prayers, which, costing nothing, would be joyfully accorded. With no great demand on their intellectual capacity, some may consider Wagner has at least a case, worthy of being heard.

The Death motive will be considered first. It appears when Brünnhilde comes to warn Siegmund that he must succumb to Hunding, and to reconcile him to his fate and offer him the glories of Walhalla. All of this is dramatically led up to by the previous scenes between Wotan and Fricka, and Wotan and Brünnhilde, where the real tragedy of the drama centres in Wotan's enforced submission to Fricka, and the consequences brought about in compelling him to sacrifice his own offspring in order to protect the law. These scenes are considered slow and dull. It requires no prophetic gifts to say that it is only a matter of time when people will wonder how the drama could be understood or listened to without them. Indeed, the drama is but little understood and little listened to. As Brünnhilde approaches Siegmund, the music

divides itself between the two eventualities, shameful death or glory in the service of Walhalla. The motive of death expands itself into the melody governing the whole scene between Siegmund and Sieglinde. His questions as to Walhalla receive answers poetically expressive of Walhalla's glories; but when with growing interest Brünnhilde is asked if Sieglinde will accompany the brother, an answer is given as if the luminaries of Walhalla's heaven were extinguished. Without Sieglinde he will not obey All-father's command. With ever-increasing significance the motive urges Siegmund to heed his fate and submit to the order; but heroes cannot be terrified. It is now that the true poetical significance of the drama becomes plain to us. Wotan's wish to raise up a divine race on earth, whose souls would have peopled Walhalla, to protect it from the dangers threatening it, has struck a deeper root than even Wotan imagined. Love for his own nature, embodied in his sister Sieglinde as well as himself, is stronger to Siegmund than any possible glory Walhalla can offer. To him devotion to his like, the devotion of the hero to his own flesh and blood, would never falter for any consideration

apart from the object of that devotion. Soon Brünnhilde, overpowered by the sight before her, pity, approval, and admiration taking possession of her feelings, declares herself ready to protect Siegmund, who, in despair, is about to take both his life and that of his sister with the sword Volse had left to him to defeat his enemies. With passionate eagerness she cries to him,—

> "Forbear, Volsung, hear my word:
> Let Sieglinde live, Siegmund shall live with her;
> 'Tis thus decreed, be the death doom recalled,
> On thee, Siegmund, triumph and bliss I bestow."

But her act of the heart has condemned her to the same fate which befell Antigone, and is the lot of all those heroic spirits who dare to defy the laws of custom. When Siegmund is slain she rushes to rescue Sieglinde. Pursued by Wotan, she receives her doom at his hands. But a new hope is now awakened in her breast. The same warm human love which had caused Siegmund to despise the glories of Walhalla, the human love which had drawn Lohengrin out of his sphere, now serves as an emotion to inspire a fervent hope in the heart of Brünnhilde. The conventional death of honour which was offered by her

to Siegmund, when she was in the service of Walhalla to lead him there, becomes to her, now banished from the godly precincts, a thing of naught. Her disgrace, her banishment, her death, becomes the door to that human love which to Siegmund was more than all the glories of Walhalla. The whole key to what passes in Brünnhilde's mind is disclosed in the words she addresses to Siegmund when she hears his refusal of Walhalla's honour.

> "So light dost thou hold eternal joy?
> Is she thy all, this hapless woman,
> Who, weary and suffering,
> Helpless hangs in thy arms?
> Naught else deem'st thou holy?"

Thus the Siegfried motive arises in the orchestra as the cognition of the new hope takes possession of the noble Brünnhilde. Walhalla sinks, human heroism arises. The death of the one gives birth to the hope of the other. This expansion of the Death motive thus is heard as the Valkyries plead for their sister, and pensively it leads into the scene between Wotan and Brünnhilde. When Wotan is about to close her eyes with a kiss, and again before he calls Loge to surround the

rock with fire, the Death motive appears; thus conclusively testifying that the poetical intent considers the sleep of Brünnhilde the death of her godly lot, retaining the symbolism of the ancient myth. This motive also appears in the scene between Erda and Wotan in the third Act of *Siegfried*, and directly precedes the advent of Siegfried on the rock. Also the first chords of Brünnhilde's awakening commence with the minor chord of the Death motive, now, however, resolving themselves into far-reaching beams of light, extolling the existence into which the kiss of manly love had awakened her. "Lang war mein Schlaf," "Siegmund sieh auf mich." The same motive accompanies this allusion to her doom as accompanied her announcement of death to Siegmund. But he had taught her more than she could have taught him. Therewith we see the complete coherency of the poetical idea, evolving itself out of its own conditions, making its own history. The Norns have still to spin the fate of those who are individually doomed to destruction, thus we hear the Death motive accompanying questions regarding fate. Once more it is heard when Brünnhilde has fathomed the

significance of the Ring, and the need of that final conscious act of sacrifice, which is owed by her to free the world from its last link of connection with the guilt of the Ring. This sacrifice is an act of self-judgment, of inner necessity, not of outward compulsion.

The last motive we have to consider partakes of two forms, the latter of which occurs only twice—that is to say in two scenes—throughout the drama. The rhythmic resemblance of these motives is apparent, forming the characteristic bond of similarity in all the motives of the Volsungs. In the Siegfried motive of four bars it occurs three times. The motive itself is first heard in the orchestra, when Sieglinde arrests Siegmund's flight from the hut of Hunding, telling him that he cannot bring misfortune to a home where it already dwells (Piano Score, *Valkyrie*, p. 15, line 4).

It is not intended to point out the number of times this motive appears during the course of the drama, but at the same time attention may be directed to its employment in a few instances. Immediately on Siegmund's determination to await Hunding, it, in conjunction with the Love

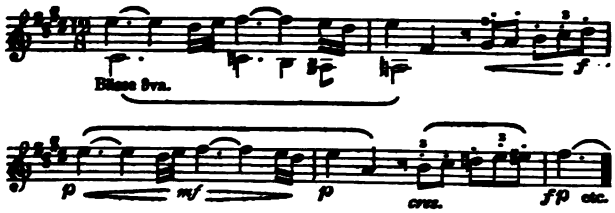
motive and Sieglinde's motive of pity for the weary fugitive, makes up a short and beautiful orchestral passage (Piano Score, *Valkyrie*, p. 16). We hear it again when Brünnhilde, sore at heart, turns away after receiving Wotan's orders to await the combat between Siegmund and Hunding. So intimately is all this music connected, that if the Valkyrie call is the same motive as the Freia motive, then the Ride of the Valkyries, so closely allied to the Sword motive, is also allied to this motive of the Volsungs. In fact, if Wagner's words to Roeckel are true—namely, that "the orchestra produces scarcely a bar which does not develop out of previous motives"—it must be so. Both Valkyries and Volsungs are embodiments of Wotan's ideas, and these ideas are musically expressed, subject to the underlying poetical import of the drama. No more can be done here than to point out the outer resemblance, which must to some extent exist if Wagner had an idea at all. All of this, to be appreciated, must be heard by people who go to the theatre with very different motives from those which animate fashionable theatre-goers at present, at least as far as this country is concerned. When Wotan

declares to Siegfried, in the second Scene of the third Act, that the spear which he now holds had once shattered the sword in Siegfried's hand, and now again it must bar its holder's progress, the motive modulates through several bars. It is also heard at the end of the first outburst of mutual greeting between Siegfried and Brünnhilde, in an incomparably jubilant orchestral passage. Everything seems to unite in one overpowering tribute to the gloriousness of sensuousness and of nature and love: free, whole, magnanimous; no trace left of a cringing before some avenging deity soured by the misery of his own wretched creation. Here we seem to attain the climax of human strength and vigour. The same motive, however, works equally effectively in a less robust form, proving its capacity to portray the beauty of the soul as well as the exuberance of the feelings. When Mime begins, in answer to Siegfried's threats—these alone drawing from Mime response to the desire for information,—to tell him of his mother, this motive arises vaguely and indefinitely in the orchestra. It has not attained its true proportion in Siegfried's mind. He feels something beautiful in

the idea of a mother, in accord with his own nature, the very opposite of what he sees in Mime, but very much akin to what is offered in nature, which responds to his inquiries without force or threats. Sieglinde died, but gave birth to him. "My mother then died through me." Still the motive is vague. "She gave thee into my charge," Mime tells him, beginning to advance his claim for gratitude. Now the motive is played entirely in its true melody, but without harmony. "When a whimpering child I brought thee up," puts in Mime. Siegfried has heard all of this before. He demands, "Now say who named me Siegfried!" Therewith the melody appears beautiful as the spirit which gave birth to it. Now Mime reminds him that he "warmed and clothed the mite." Voice and melody together ask, "Now tell me my mother's name." Once again Mime whines, once again Siegfried demands the name, to the beauty of the Volsung nature "materialised in tone." Mime continues to whimper; and as Siegfried demands to know the name of his father, the motive takes its more dramatic form; and then, as always, the spirit of truth becomes impatient with the double-dealing, cringing spirit

of avarice, and demands, with threats, proof of that which it has been compelled to disclose. This is a scene of such poetry and beauty as can belong to Wagner's art alone. In the second Act, in the forest, the motive seems to grow still more in beauty. When Siegfried has taken the treasure from the dragon's den, and gazes on it innocent of its evil, inspired by no dreams of avarice, Mime approaches, putting into Siegfried's thoughts what he himself thinks: "He broods and weighs the booty's worth." What are really Siegfried's thoughts the music makes clear to us. The music can do so alone. The Volsung nature stands revealed in its purest beauty. Nothing in poetry can surpass what these bars of music reveal to us. It is the same nature as Sieglinde expressed when she poured out her gratitude to Brünnhilde and departed to give birth to him who now inherits that nature. The form is different, the soul is the same. This particular development of the Volsung music only appears twice—in Sieglinde's words of gratitude to Brünnhilde, and Brünnhilde's last act of devotion in the *Dusk of the Gods*, in order to free the world from the curse in which conscious egoistic desire

has enclosed it. At the words, "Grane my steed, I greet thee now. Knowest thou, my friend, whither I lead thee?" the theme sets in with



a hitherto unattained intensity of indomitable resolution and devotion; and when the Walhalla music and other motives have run their course, to be surmounted by the theme of Siegfried the Volsung, this motive of inspired love is gently wafted as a reminiscence and a legacy of how the life-giving dispensation of the new had been a death-entailing condition of the old.

The *Ring of the Nibelung* is thus one immense tribute to nature, dramatically expressed. It contains nothing new, but Wagner's own original way of setting an old idea. There is, however, one point about it which serves to make it distasteful to those whose systems only serve to carry on a species of mental juggling with optimism of a pessimistic kind, and pessimism of an

optimistic kind. It is outspoken, honest, and clear. Naturally it appears obscure to those who sit at the feet of teachers who will not inquire into their own double-dealing and facing-both-ways. The idea of a god who made a world and then condemned his own creation to drowning, eventually to eternal hell fire, is a species of teaching which is optimistic or pessimistic just as one wishes, to suit the occasion. Evidently, if nothing more honest can be taught than that, a god is badly needed for such teaching. Where, however, this world is accepted as good, the principle which sustains it cannot stoop to indulge in cruel tricks of vengeance. Wagner then lays the source of evil in the *Ring* at the door of responsibility, *where that responsibility can be grasped and seized.* When those who exercise this responsible rule become aware, by having to inflict their cruelty on their own flesh and blood, that coercive authority and injustice are one and the same, they will renounce such an authority. Millions of people believe in optimism: how many will continue to believe in it when its import is clearly stated, as is the case in this magnificent work of Wagner? So far people do not know what forms their con-

tentious matter, and only independent workers can enlighten them.

Destroy yet redeem.—Such words might be adopted as a motto for Wagner's career during the time he conceived and executed his work. The redemption would, in virtue of the innate goodness of man, follow the destruction, which involved nothing but complete freedom of mankind from the delusive egoism of advertised nobility and the sordid abasement of manhood to the desire for power and money. There was no conscious conflict between two opposing factions. The good arose and replaced the evil when it was born, independent of the conditions which brought about the evil, and received aid from the spirit which was in sympathy with the good. The moral significance lay in the personal conflict which on the one hand prompted the tyrannical, un-loving spirit to acquire further power, and on the other to give freedom to its bent for love. The one, however, could not prosper if the other received its due. It is only the wisdom of Solomon self-applied. What is right discloses itself when it is left to human love for one's own to supply the test. As was the

case with Hume and the problem of causation, Wagner's merit does not lie in having solved the problem of life, but in having stated it. We may be assured that never again will it be stated with such power and beauty.

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